

# Securing our water

## NSW Government water reform action plan

December 2017



## Our water goals in NSW

**Introduce best practice  
for water management**



**Ensure transparency in  
how we share, allocate  
and manage water**



**Build a compliance and  
enforcement regime  
that ensures strong and  
certain regulation**



**Build capability to  
support implementation  
of water reforms**



## Our priorities

Water is one of our most valuable natural assets. We have a responsibility to the people of NSW to ensure we have an equitable and transparent approach to the management of our water now and for future generations.

We will manage water to:

- support jobs, economic growth, the environment, and our health and wellbeing
- deliver efficient services with a focus on innovation, performance and affordability
- improve the health of priority waterways and their catchments to support our environmental, social, cultural and economic needs and values
- support the sustainable use of and access to water
- enable farmers and all water users to achieve and improve water efficiency with the available water, while supporting regional communities to adjust to a changing climate
- plan infrastructure that secures water supply and increases drought resilience across our communities
- support the wellbeing of rural and regional communities who enjoy the recreational benefits our regional waterways provide.

# NSW Government's action plan to reform water management



## Introduce best practice for water management

What are we doing	How we will do it	By when
Established a new Lands and Water division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a division solely focused on the management of land and water resources</li></ul>	Q4 2017
Establishing a new regulatory framework for water management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Legislate to establish an independent regulator—Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR)</li><li>• Appoint an interim chief regulatory officer</li><li>• Appoint an independent board to oversee the NRAR</li><li>• Appoint a chief regulatory officer</li><li>• Develop and publish the Natural Resources Access Regulator Establishment Plan</li></ul>	Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q4 2017 Q2 2018 Q2 2018
Define and explain the specific roles of government bodies that have accountability for water management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clarify the accountabilities of departments and agencies with water management responsibilities in NSW</li><li>• Create clear functional separation between those who provide and sell water to customers and those who oversee and regulate water as a public resource</li><li>• Make information on accountability and roles publicly available</li></ul>	Q2 2018 Q2 2018 Q2 2018





## Build a compliance and enforcement regime that ensures strong and certain regulation

What are we doing	How we will do it	By when
Strengthening compliance and enforcement capacity	• Increase compliance and enforcement resourcing by \$9.5 million per year	Q4 2017
	• Recruit additional compliance and enforcement officers	Q2 2018
	• Conduct additional training for all compliance and enforcement staff including in investigation techniques	Q3 2018
	• Invest in case management technology, databases and analytics to more effectively target compliance activity	Q3 2018
	• Report annually on compliance and enforcement activities and publish on the Department of Industry website	Q3 2019
Establish a new independent regulator with strong regulatory powers	• Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) to lead on compliance matters	Q2 2018
	• NRAR to take appropriate enforcement action, including penalty infringement notices and prosecutions	Q2 2018
	• WaterNSW to implement mandatory immediate reporting to the NRAR of suspected breaches	Q2 2018
	• NRAR to produce and publish clear and effective policies and processes for compliance that also address the recommendations of the Matthews and NSW ombudsman reports and the MDBA's water compliance review	Q2 2018
	• NRAR to undertake proactive targeted compliance operations	Q4 2018
Implement a robust metering framework	• Consult on a metering and water discussion paper for public consultation incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ an approach to implementing 'no meter, no pump' objectives</li> <li>◦ identification of any necessary legislative reforms to support these changes</li> <li>◦ how we monitor metering of water consumption</li> <li>◦ policy on self-reporting and random checks</li> </ul>	Q2 2018
	• Finalise a timetable for implementing new metering requirements following consultation	Q4 2018
Adopt innovative technologies to improve compliance effectiveness	• Seek proposals to pilot the use of technology for water monitoring and compliance activities, which could include remote sensing of on-farm water storages and indicators such as crop growth and telemetry	Q2 2018
	• Develop a water monitoring technology plan	Q1 2019



## Ensure transparency in how we share, allocate and manage water

What are we doing	How we will do it	By when
Increase transparency in water management	• Release a discussion paper on creating a public register of water information that could cover water entitlements, water licences and water work approvals	Q2 2018
	• Publish compliance and enforcement activities	Q3 2018
	• Publish information on the Department of Industry's website about activities in protecting environmental water	Q4 2018
	• Regularly report on progress implementing water inquiry reforms	Q1 2018 onwards
	• Have NRAR establish mechanisms for the public to report alleged breaches, including a statewide hotline and email channel	Q3 2019
	• Commission an annual, independent review of progress on this plan and publish the results	Q1 2019
	• Redesign the Department of Industry website to provide updated and more accessible information on water management	Q1 2019
Create a stakeholder engagement framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a new stakeholder engagement framework</li> <li>• Develop and publish a schedule of stakeholder engagement activities</li> </ul>	Q1 2018 Q1 2018
Better manage environmental water	• Establish an interagency working group to develop solutions to improve the management of environmental water	Q1 2018
	• Have the working group present interim solutions within 90 days of commencement	Q2 2018
	• Publish explanatory materials to inform the public on how environmental water is managed	Q1 2019
	• Have all NSW water resource plans accredited by the MDBA	Q3 2019



## Build capability to support implementation of water reforms

What are we doing	How we will do it	By when
Build capability, improve standards and embed an ethical culture	• Update staff induction processes to emphasise ethical and conduct obligations of staff	Q1 2018
	• Roll out department-wide ethics and professional standards training	Q1 2018
	• Commence a 'speak-up' service to enable anonymous reporting of suspected unsatisfactory conduct	Q1 2018
	• Develop the Department of Industry ethical framework to connect all training, systems and activities to embed ethical behaviour into departmental culture	Q3 2018

# Investing in a sustainable water future for NSW

The NSW Government is working to ensure a sustainable water future for NSW.

Key projects include:

## Safe and Secure Water Program

The Safe and Secure Water Program is a \$1 billion NSW Government co-funding program that will target water and sewerage projects in regional NSW to ensure infrastructure meets contemporary standards for water security, public health, environmental and safety outcomes into the future.

The program will provide co-funding to successful applicants such as local councils, water utilities, water corporations and prescribed dam owners for detailed planning and construction activities to install, augment or decommission water and sewerage infrastructure.

## Water resource plans

The NSW Government will develop 22 water resource plans (WRPs) to set out arrangements to share water for consumptive use. The WRPs will establish rules to meet environmental and water quality objectives and will take into account potential and emerging risks to water resources. WRPs will play a key role in ensuring implementation of limits on the quantity of surface and groundwater that can be taken from the Murray Darling Basin for consumptive purposes.

## NSW Healthy Floodplains

The NSW Healthy Floodplains project will help drive reform in water management in northern basin floodplains. This includes managing development in floodplain areas and bringing water extractions from floodplains into a water licensing framework. The NSW Government is implementing the NSW Healthy Floodplains Project across five valleys in northern NSW: the Border-Rivers, Gwydir, Namoi, Barwon-Darling and Macquarie valleys. The project will help NSW meet extraction limits defined in WRPs and the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

## Broken Hill Pipeline

Securing Broken Hill's water supply is the centrepiece of the NSW Government's \$1 billion Regional Water Security and Supply Fund.

A reliable water supply for Broken Hill will underpin business confidence in the region, support the full functioning of health infrastructure and the tourism industry, and improve employment outcomes in the region. The water security package represents one of the largest investments into regional water security on record and puts the region on a stable economic footing for generations to come.

## Menindee Lakes

The new Broken Hill pipeline also means the Menindee Lakes can be managed more efficiently to balance the need for productive water, environmental flows and the importance of the lakes for the local community.



Edward River, Deniliquin. Credit: Destination NSW

# Who's who in NSW water management

## FEDERAL

### Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA)

- Established as an independent, expertise-based statutory agency
- Responsible for planning the basin's water resources, with all planning decisions made in the interest of the basin as a whole
- Prepares, implements and reviews integrated plans for the sustainable use of the basin's water resources
- Operates the Murray River system and efficiently delivers water to users on behalf of partner governments, as well as measuring, monitoring and recording the quality and quantity of the basin's water resources
- Provides water rights information to facilitate water trading across the basin.

### Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

- Manages the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings so as to protect or restore environmental assets in the Murray Darling Basin and in other areas where environmental water is held.

### Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

- Responsible for the management and use of water resources including the National Water Initiative, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, urban water policy and reform, and water quality improvement
- Administer the key Commonwealth funding programs relevant to water management reforms.

## STATE

### Department of Industry—Lands and Water

- Responsible for surface and groundwater management including ensuring water security for NSW
- Ensures equitable sharing of surface and groundwater resources and that water entitlements and allocations are secure and tradeable
- Manages NSW's water resources through planning, policy and regulation
- Leads negotiations with the Commonwealth, including the MDBA and other jurisdictions.

### WaterNSW

- The state's bulk water supplier and operational manager of surface water and groundwater resources
- Develops and operates infrastructure solutions for water supply security and reliability
- Conducts customer-facing functions such as the delivery of water and billing.

### Office of Environment & Heritage

- Manages the state's environmental water holdings
- Develop a long-term environmental watering plan as required under the Basin Plan.

### Natural Resources Access Regulator

- A new organisation to become operational in 2018
- Responsible for compliance and enforcement of NSW water law with powers for investigations and other strategies as part of providing quality regulation
- Determines when to commence prosecutions or uses other enforcement tools in the event of non-compliance
- Other functions include:
  - preparing policies and procedures relating to the enforcement powers under natural resources management legislation
  - advising and reporting to the Minister on matters relating to administration of natural resources management legislation
  - publishing details of convictions in prosecutions
- The NRAR will initially focus on water regulation, but as it matures other prescribed natural resource management areas may be added.

## More information

NSW Department of Industry  
[industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform](http://industry.nsw.gov.au/water-reform)  
Ph 02 9338 6600



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PUB17/895