



Australian Government



# Northern Basin projects

The northern Murray–Darling Basin includes northern New South Wales and southern Queensland in a complex network of people and places, industries and organisations with many and varied needs.

A major review of water management in the northern Basin over four years recommended a ‘toolkit of measures’ to improve the way the rivers are run. These initiatives, along with other activities in the northern Basin, will protect water for the environment, improve compliance with water laws, and create opportunities for local communities, including First Nations.

The initiatives complement and support the implementation of the Basin Plan. The Basin Plan guides how water is managed and used sustainably in the Basin.

Over the coming years, Basin governments will work with local communities to ensure local knowledge and needs are considered in project design and delivery. Some initiatives have already begun, while others may take many years to complete.



## Key facts

The health of the northern Basin is important for cultural and community wellbeing, as well as for agricultural production and the sustainability of the river system.



Initiatives are underway to more **effectively and efficiently move water through the river system**, including reaching important environmental sites in the northern Basin.



Basin governments are committed to the **consistent and transparent compliance** and enforcement of water use.



The **Northern Basin Commissioner** was appointed as an advocate for northern Basin communities and has since been superseded by the Interim Inspector General.



First Nations will be supported to plan and implement **cultural water entitlements** and flows.



The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment provides regular updates on its website on the **progress of the northern Basin initiatives**.

## Environmental projects

Initiatives are underway to improve water delivery and water management including moving water through the river system more efficiently to where it needs to be and when it needs to be there.

These projects will include:

- improved real-time management of environmental water flows (also called active management)
- coordination and delivery of water for the environment
- protecting habitats and promoting fish movement (such as fishways)
- improved mechanisms around storing and releasing water.

These improvements will benefit the northern Basin river system, improve the habitat for animals during dry times, and improve the health of rivers downstream.

## Protecting water for the environment

A range of initiatives are being implemented to strengthen compliance with water laws and increase the protection of water for the environment.

It is important that environmental water is protected, so it can be used to support special environmental sites in the northern Basin including the Narran Lakes, Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir Wetlands. This water also benefits fish, animals and plants that depend on healthy rivers to feed, nest and grow. The health of the system also underpins production, eco-tourism and community wellbeing.

## Cultural water

Water is vital to Aboriginal culture, spirituality, identity and wellbeing.

Initiatives are underway to support cultural gatherings and the recreational use of rivers, including the recent announcement of a new weir to be built at Wilcannia to be jointly funded by the NSW and Australian governments.

Cultural flows in the northern Basin are water entitlements owned and managed by northern Basin First Nations. The Australian Government has committed \$20 million over four years to support First Nations to plan and implement cultural water entitlements.

## Social and economic initiatives

The Basin Plan is a substantial reform. This reform has impacted on some communities in the northern Basin who have experienced changes in population, economic activity and employment.

Initiatives are being developed to assist northern Basin communities who have experienced change as a result of the Basin Plan. Local engagement facilitators will work closely with the Collarenebri, Dirranbandi, St George and Warren communities to identify opportunities to support them during this change.

## Northern Basin Commissioner

An independent Northern Basin Commissioner was appointed in 2018 as an advocate for northern Basin communities, and to collate technical and scientific information to improve governments' understanding of the river system in the northern Basin.

## Gwydir constraints project

One of the potential projects in the northern Basin is the removal of constraints in the Gwydir, to improve delivery of water for the environment to the Gwydir wetlands near Moree.

Initiatives may include changes to physical features such as crossings and bridges.

Project design and delivery will involve the local community.



### Connect with us.

The MDBA has offices in Adelaide, Albury-Wodonga, Canberra, Goondiwindi, Griffith, Mildura, Murray-Bridge, Toowoomba, and regional engagement officers around the Basin.

☎ 1800 230 067

✉ [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au)

🌐 [mdba.gov.au](http://mdba.gov.au)