



Out of the BOCs

The Basin Officials Committee (BOC) met on 9 June 2021 with most Committee members being on Wiradjuri Country, in Griffith, New South Wales. The BOC were disappointed that their Victorian member was unable to attend in person due to the Melbourne COVID-19 'lockdown'.

The meeting coincided with the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) *River Reflections Conference* which provided an opportunity for most BOC members to meet with community stakeholders from the Griffith area and across the Basin.

Before the formal meeting, the BOC met with the Basin Community Committee (BCC) and the MDBA Board for a discussion focused on improving transparency and trust with Basin communities. In response to BCC comments about the transparency of its decision-making, the BOC committed to publish a record of decisions and activities, noting that many of BOC's recommendations go to the Ministerial Council for approval. The BOC is actively discussing ways to improve connections with Basin communities through more direct engagement.

Basin governments have already taken steps to improve transparency on the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) projects through [public status reporting](#). In this regard, the BOC agreed to a suite of measures to improve project management and monitoring of 'at-risk' projects.

BOC's 2021 workplan is aligned to deliver the priorities that Basin water ministers agreed in [November 2020](#). To:

- *support Basin communities through the Murray–Darling Communities Investment Package*
- *implement the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, including delivery of supply and constraints, efficiency and toolkit measures*
- *consider reform to the water market following the ACCC final report*
- *address deliverability risks in the River Murray system.*

The BOC considered the 2021–22 [Joint Programs](#) workplan and budget, which once approved by Basin Water Ministers, will be published on the MDBA's website. BOC members also discussed a new three-year Federal Funding Agreement to support water reform implementation and the need for BOC to take a more active role in delivering on its river operations responsibilities.

The BOC also had discussions on the establishment of an independent, expert panel, announced as part of the Australian Government's Budget process, to develop a phased implementation plan for water market reform. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) released its [final report](#) on the Murray-Darling Basin water markets inquiry on 26 March 2021. The ACCC recommended significant and wide-ranging water market reforms. To enable a clear pathway to be identified for progressing water market reforms it is important that there is close consultation and coordination with Basin states and water market stakeholders.



Murray-Darling Basin
Basin Officials Committee

The BOC members were also updated on work underway to progress the second independent review of the Water for the Environment Special Account (WESA). Information on the first review is [available here](#).

The next BOC meeting is currently scheduled for August 2021 which will include a workshop on capacity and deliverability issues in the River Murray.

The BOC has six members – one senior official from each Basin jurisdiction including the Commonwealth – and provides advice to both the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council on matters including Basin Plan implementation and Basin water management policy. The BOC also makes high-level decisions on river operations on the River Murray. More information on the BOC is available on [its webpage](#).