



Draft recommendations released for the Barwon-Darling Water Sharing Plan review

The NSW Natural Resources Commission has released its draft recommendations on the *Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012*. The Commission argues that an intense drought, significant volumes of upstream water extractions, an apparent climate shift and the rules within the Plan have all contributed to insufficient ecological, social and cultural outcomes in the Plan area.

The former Minister for Regional Water, the Hon Niall Blair requested the Commission bring forward its statutory review of the Plan. The review is tasked with assessing the extent to which the Plan contributed to environmental, social and economic outcomes, and advising on whether changes to the Plan provisions are warranted.

The Commission recognises the NSW Department of Industry has undertaken significant and commendable reform since 2017; however, steps to improve water management need to be accelerated and further extended.

The review identified key issues that have particularly impacted on water management under the Plan, including:

- the lack of specific ecological targets
- cease to pump rules based on incomplete ecological data
- the rules allowing increased volume and rate of extractions of water in low flows (A class licenses) and allowance to take “imminent flows”,
- the lack of ability to utilise held environmental water for environmental purposes,
- the failure to introduce individual daily extraction and total daily extraction limits
- the failure to allocate water in line with Native Title

“There is an urgent need to remake the Plan so the current trend of a river system heading towards collapse is reset and the river and its dependent species, communities and industries are put on a path towards long term health and resilience” said John Keniry, Commissioner.

The draft report is available here for public consultation: <https://www.nrc.nsw.gov.au/2018-2019-wsp-reviews>.

The Commission is seeking feedback by Monday 19 August 2019 in:

- Writing to *Water Sharing Plan Reviews, Natural Resources Commission, GPO Box 5341, Sydney NSW 2001*
- Emailing to nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au, or
- Calling for further support to make your submission (02) 9228 4844.

The final report will be delivered to the Minister for Water, the Hon Melinda Pavey in early September 2019.