

Mr Bryce Wilde
Executive Director
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 5341
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Bryce

Audit of implementation of Floodplain Management Plans for the Lachlan, Murray and Murrumbidgee

I refer to your letter of 31 August 2020 concerning the audit of the implementation of the ten southern floodplain management plans in the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray valleys, and our response from the CEO – NSW Water Sector, Jim Bentley.

Consistent with the earlier response, I note the audit finding that ‘the provisions of the plans have not been given full effect’. I understand that the audit has also made recommendations to address several key issues and their contributing factors.

The Department has considered each of the recommendations and suggested actions outlined in the review report. The Department agrees in principle to all of these and is progressing two key areas of work which I believe will contribute to addressing matters identified within the audit. These are:

1. Commissioning a review of these same plans under section 43 of the *Water Management Act 2000* to consider whether the provisions of the plans remain adequate and appropriate for ensuring the effective implementation of the water management principles (Recommendation 6.1)
2. Commissioning work to develop a plan for monitoring environmental outcomes from implementing the NSW Floodplain Harvesting (FPH) Policy and the Floodplain Management Plans (contributing to Recommendations 3.1, 4.1, 5.1).

The outcomes of this work, along with the Commission’s audit, will inform the next steps in relation to these management plans.

The Department has already progressed sharing and improved accessibility of spatial data with NRAR and WaterNSW to support the approvals assessment process, assessment of cumulative impacts of flood works and facilitation of flood studies (Action 3); and is undertaking remote sensing work to monitor flood flows which could contribute to ongoing monitoring activities for plans into the future (Recommendation 4.1).

In addition to this work the Department is progressing consideration of options to address:

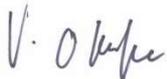
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- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation requirements and responsibilities, noting that the Department is commissioning work to develop a MER plan for NSW water sharing plans, due in mid-2021. While the initial work will focus on water sharing plans it is anticipated that over time similar approaches will be extended to floodplain management plans (Recommendation 3.1).
- Procuring and retaining appropriate expertise and staff resources to inform future planning and implementation processes and development of appropriate procedures and processes to improve transparency and accountability. Note that the Department is currently working on a Healthy Floodplains Transition Plan which aims to transfer all floodplain management planning roles and responsibilities from the **NSW Healthy Floodplains Project** team into business as usual operations within the Department. This transition will include an analysis of different management and funding mechanisms and will identify resource requirements and responsibilities (Actions 1 and 2);
- Ongoing education and awareness regarding flood work approval obligations, noting that the floodplain planning processes (amendment, replacement) will provide an opportunity for engagement and improving stakeholder awareness of obligations (Action 5).

Progression of work is subject to the confirmation of funding for ongoing activities.

If you require additional information or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact Mr Peter Hyde, Director Inland Planning at peter.hyde@dpie.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Vanessa O'Keefe
Executive Director Policy & Planning
Water Group

14 December 2020