



Snowy Advisory Committee

Meeting no.7: Jindabyne

26th & 27th Nov 2019

Communique

The Snowy Advisory Committee met on 26 November in Jindabyne.

The effect of drought on water available for environmental flows is serious. Water availability next year is shaping up to be the lowest since 2010/11 when the Snowy Water Initiative completed its licence recovery. Around 90 gigalitres is available. This is equal to only 8% of the annual average flow for the Snowy River below Jindabyne. The flow target of 21% has only once occurred in 2017/18 due to the previous year being extremely wet.

The Thredbo River flows naturally at a similar size to the flow available below Jindabyne Dam. Flows in the Thredbo are therefore used to guide the basic pattern of flows for the Snowy River below Jindabyne Dam. With so little water available, the Committee has been looking at 2006/07, the lowest Thredbo flow year ever recorded, along with the next lowest (1997/98) to guide flow setting for 2020/21.

Flows for the montane streams (the upper Snowy River system, the Geehi River system, the upper Murrumbidgee River and the Goodradigbee River) are set in proportion to the water available below Jindabyne Dam. In 2020/21 the water allocations will be so low that not all of these montane streams can be supported with environmental water for the whole year.

The Committee is working through the options that will have the least impact on objectives of maintaining refuge and protecting threatened species. The Committee is also endeavouring to protect gains made from flows previously provided.

The Committee discussed the development of its long-term strategy. This will provide a framework of seasonal objectives for dry, average and wet years. It will consider the quadruple bottom line - benefits to the environment, but also social, economic and cultural benefits.

The Committee welcomed Elena Guarracino, the Chair of the Snowy River Alliance, who presented to the Committee the Alliance's concerns and hopes for the Snowy and montane rivers and outlined the SRA's key objective to see the assessment of flow delivery options from Mowamba Weir resolved as an outcome of the Snowy Water Licence Review.

Following their meeting, the Committee travelled from Jindabyne via the Barry Way to see the Jacobs and Pinch Rivers, two tributaries of the Snowy. They inspected the impressive reach of the Snowy River between Jacobs River and Willis at the Victorian border. The Committee were privileged to be guided by Chris Griffiths, an experienced Traditional Owner and Tristan Ricketson of Parks NSW, who provided personal, cultural and technical insights and stories.