

Department of Planning and Environment

Wyangala Dam Wall Raising

Project Update

January 2023



Wyangala Dam: The Final Case Business will reflect the team's testing, evaluations and consultation with communities along the Lachlan catchment.

Final Business Case moves ahead

The Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project will submit its Final Business Case (FBC) to the NSW Government in the first half of 2023.

The FBC will help the state and federal governments make evidence-based investment decisions and determine if they will provide funding for the Project.

This January 2023 Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project newsletter provides progress on:

- field studies focused on flora, fauna and aquatic life around the reservoir, along the river system and in the Lower Lachlan
- discussions and meetings with our valued communities and stakeholders
- consultation with Aboriginal communities upstream and downstream of Wyangala Dam
- geotechnical mapping.



Fauna experts arrive by boat to investigate the diverse ecology along the dam catchment areas before flora studies become the focus in September 2022 (shown below).

Experts in the field uncover key findings

Field studies offer a deeper understanding of the Aboriginal heritage, environment and intricate ecosystems along the Lachlan River and provide crucial data for the Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Final Business Case (FBC).

The studies through late winter and spring 2022 concentrated on flora, fauna and some aquatic life around the reservoir, along the river system and in the Lower Lachlan.

Project team members took to the night as field studies focused on 59 properties upstream of Wyangala Dam to capture nocturnal activities.

Eight AudioMoth recorders and full-spectrum acoustic loggers helped experts capture the sounds of our after-dark inhabitants. Collective ears listened particularly for the Key's Matchstick Grasshopper.

Initial findings last autumn indicated the area was an unlikely home for the grasshopper. Feedback from the most recent tests supported these earlier reports.

Our team also recorded some species previously reported in the area. ([Click here to read more](#)).

While rain hampered efforts to reach every corner of the properties, it provided perfect conditions for the large number of frog species recorded.

Flora takes spring focus

Ecology experts returned upstream of the dam in September to complete a week-long search for threatened and non-threatened flora species in the Project area.

The team targeted areas previously inaccessible due to rain and revisited grasslands to take more soil and vegetation samples and determine whether changing conditions meant the localities needed to be remapped.

The studies did not find any new threatened flora populations.





Field experts assist a NSW environmental water manager to monitor the progression of environmental flows near Booligal.

Surveys move downstream

The Project team headed west later in September 2022 to progress its environmental studies downstream in the Lower Lachlan.

Downstream near Booligal, the team was ground-truthing vegetation and habitat mapping to help clarify potential impacts on wetlands, creeks and associated species.

Studies in the western end of the Lachlan bring the total number of flora and fauna field surveys to 24 along the entire catchment since April 2020.

Water Infrastructure NSW thanks the various communities and groups along the Lachlan River for their ongoing input, and the landholders who have allowed our field teams access to their properties.

To view the latest Field Surveys Fact Sheets on our website, [click here](#).



Recently flooded land on a property near the Cumbung Swamp.

Listening and learning from the Lachlan

Our team is taking every opportunity to listen to communities and stakeholders to ensure we capture their thoughts, ideas and experiences to best serve the future of the Lachlan catchment. COVID lockdowns may have given way to persistent rain during 2022. But over the past months, we have attended and participated in several community and stakeholder events.

Lachlan Valley Water Annual General Meeting, Condobolin

The Project team updated Lachlan Valley Water members about the current work and timing of the Final Business Case and discussed balancing objectives to:

- improve water security and reliability – by storing more water
- reduce flood impacts – by leaving additional airspace
- protect the environment – by periodic flooding of environmentally sensitive areas in the Lower Lachlan.

It also discussed hydrology and flood modelling being undertaken, progress at the Wyangala Treatment Plant, and the biodiversity offsets for terrestrial, aquatic and fish passage – and how they're calculated.

After the AGM, team members listened to various stakeholders and landowners before joining Jock and Katrina Coupland to see first-hand the impact of the Lachlan River's flows at their property west of Condobolin.

Listening to the Lachlan

The Project team was invited to the two-day event in Forbes to outline the Project and answer questions alongside environmental, water, soil and cultural experts. It discussed the dam wall raising in relation to Traditional Custodians, grazing, irrigation, agricultural industries, fishers and other communities to ensure everyone along the river has reliable high-quality water.



Floodwaters head past 10.66 metres at the Iron Bridge gauge at Forbes and 13.39m at the Nanami gauge near Gooloogong in early November on route to 70-year highs.



The Lachlan River pushes up the riverbanks west of Condobolin.

Emergency services meetings

The Project team met with emergency services representatives in Forbes to better understand how flows impacted residents, businesses and properties of the town and outlying areas.

Forbes Captain, NSW Fire & Rescue, Brian Clarke, and Forbes Local SES Controller, Roc Walshaw, each provided the team with detailed information about past floods, the challenges they create, and the processes to protect residents.

Upstream property visits

Following COVID travel restrictions and between flood conditions, the team has again been able to meet with landowners. This includes answering requests for meetings and property visits upstream of the dam to better understand conditions first-hand and discuss the impact of the wall raising.

If you are a landowner with specific land or acquisition questions, please contact the Project team. We can arrange a site visit or Teams meeting with you and Water Infrastructure's Land Acquisition team.



Aboriginal groups share cultural values, stories

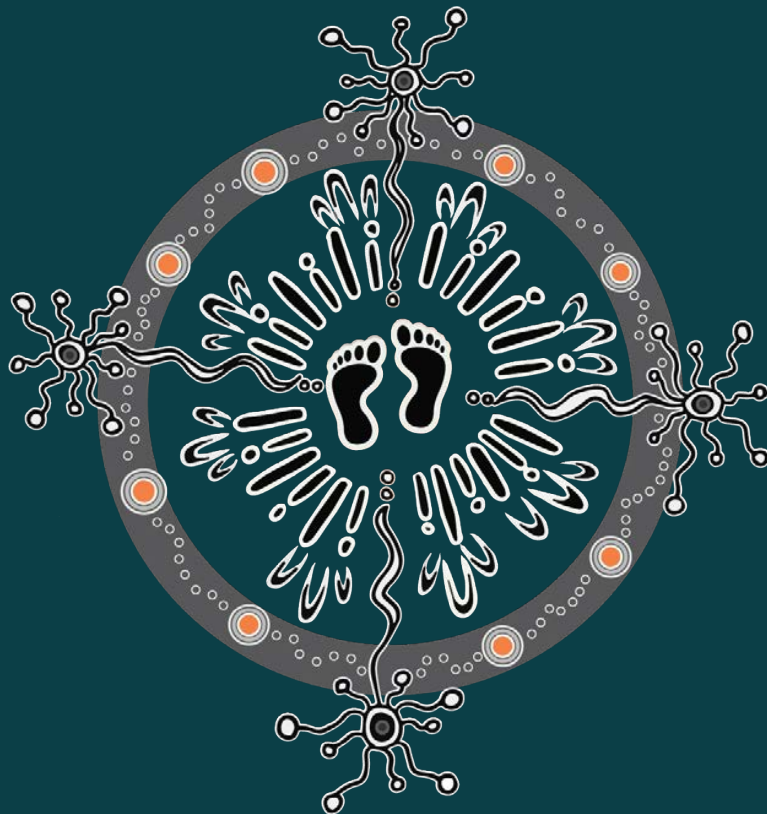
Consultation with Aboriginal communities upstream and downstream of Wyangala Dam has been pivotal in Project planning and will be crucial in developing appropriate water management strategies in the Lachlan Valley catchment.

Nineteen Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) have shared their cultural values, stories and views about the Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project area and surrounding landscape.

Collated into the Aboriginal Cultural Values Report (ACVR), this information will support the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report (ACHAR) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) being prepared on behalf of Water Infrastructure NSW (WINSW).

While the ACVR captures strong feelings towards the current state of the river, it also highlights the overwhelming desire to share knowledge and stories of important places to individual Aboriginal communities along the Lachlan River.

The Planning and Environmental Lead on the Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project explains the importance of appropriate consultation with these key stakeholders.



Respect and connection to Country



Fundamental to understanding cultural heritage significance is ensuring appropriate consultation with Aboriginal knowledge holders has taken place, says Sofie Mason-Jones from the Project team.

This consultation combines field surveys, written notifications, questionnaires, phone conversations, Elders' storytelling and face-to-face meetings on Country.

"It was important to meet on Country despite it being challenging during COVID," Sofie says. "But despite travel restrictions, we mobilised a number of times when possible, to meet on Country."

Sofie says it's important for the Project team to meet with and listen to Aboriginal stakeholders sharing their experiences and knowledge on Country.

"It was about having a connection to Country in the storytelling, enhancing the experience of sharing that story on Country and for the information to inform the Project."

She says these discussions form a valued part of the cultural values significance assessment.

"It brings a range of things together – historical storytelling, scientific, social, and spiritual values of a place.

"Once we add in all those layers, it helps explain the significance of this place to each Aboriginal stakeholder.

"In this instance, we're primarily focusing on the Lachlan River landscape. So it's about the river, the connection to the river itself, the surrounding landscape, and access to the river."

She says this has helped Aboriginal stakeholders talk about "reference points" along the river, including wetlands, lakes and hills.

"We've also heard a lot about 'the mission', different cemeteries and reserves connecting to Elders' stories about the river passed down from generation to generation.

"The Lachlan River is their lifeline and identity. They want to reflect on changes to the waterway and any impacts on this identity and their cultural values."

Apart from discussions with Elders and the Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), the team consults with Heritage NSW, Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs), native title holders and individuals.

This consultation also helps map places of Aboriginal cultural significance along the river corridor and waterway access.

“It’s about getting back a connection to the river and being able to walk along the front of the river land,” Sofie says.

“That’s been a primary area of our discussions. Facilitating access to Country so Aboriginal people can maintain the spiritual and cultural connection, which they feel has been lost since private landholders now occupy up to the river frontage.”

River flows and the possibility of establishing Aboriginal reserves or camps for conducting ceremonies have also been key points of discussions.

And these will remain key points of discussions as on-Country face-to-face conversations continue with Aboriginal communities about the management of natural values for the Lachlan River corridor.

“Our Water Infrastructure First Nations team has been positively received by a number of Aboriginal stakeholders,” Sofie says.

“They’ve said government is listening, and now has an organisation within government looking at First Nations priorities.”

Water Infrastructure NSW acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



The Lachlan River: A cultural connection for our Aboriginal communities.



Landowners, holiday park van owners impacted by inundation

The Project team continues to work through the Final Business Case (FBC) before it is submitted to Infrastructure NSW and the NSW Government in the first half of 2023.

As planning, hydrology modelling, field surveys and site investigations offer insight into the complexity and scope of this Project, a clearer understanding is emerging on likely timeframes and scheduling of key stages. This includes consultation during the drafting and exhibition of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). We plan to be back in your communities to have more conversations and arrange information sessions, pending the investment decisions.

For the Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project to progress to construction, we need to obtain approval of the FBC and EIS. The Federal Government has deemed the EIS requires assessment under the Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Act, which means the Project will need to obtain environmental approvals from federal and state governments. Formal property acquisition discussions will only start after these government approvals are obtained.

If you have any questions, please contact us on 1800 735 822 or wyangaladamproject@dpie.nsw.gov.au

Summer in Wyangala

It has been business as usual around Wyangala as van owners and visitors at Wyangala Waters Holiday Park enjoy the summer holidays. Last year's persistent rain created a few challenges at the new water treatment plant, but it is expected to be completed in the first half of 2023.

We will be commissioning the system later in autumn – so you may see us out and about. We'll provide specific updates for you closer to the time. But as always reach out if you have any questions.



Wall tests increase understanding, reduce risks

Our Project team continues its geotechnical mapping near the dam wall to inform the design and planning for the Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project.

Laboratory testing and data analysis also progresses on the sonic drill samples taken from the crest of the dam wall in May last year (shown above).

These tests and data help improve our knowledge of ground conditions around the Project area, increasing certainty and reducing risk. They also provide better indications of Project costs.

Election caretaker period

In the weeks leading up to the NSW election there are special arrangements in place to ensure the neutrality of the public service.

From January 26 until March 25 2023, our primary source of communications will be via our website. Our regular electronic newsletters will cease during this period.

For any enquiries, contact us by email: wyangaladamproject@dpie.nsw.gov.au or call 1800 735 822 during business hours.

Stay in touch and up to date

If you have any questions or would like more information, please keep in touch with our Project team:



Call 1800 735 822



For general enquiries email wyangaladamproject@dpie.nsw.gov.au



Visit our website dpie.nsw.gov.au/wyangala-dam



Follow our Facebook page - visit [Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Project](#)




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Wyangala Dam Wall Raising Community Dashboard

December 2022




Improving long term water security and drought resilience in the Lachlan Valley


80
Community events



627 *
attendees



152
Stakeholder briefings




108
Landowner meetings

* Cumulative from August 2020 - present

Local community sentiment

87% awareness 68% support





17
Registered Aboriginal Parties




371
Local businesses registered



104
Local businesses engaged



708 Emails in 43,932 Emails out

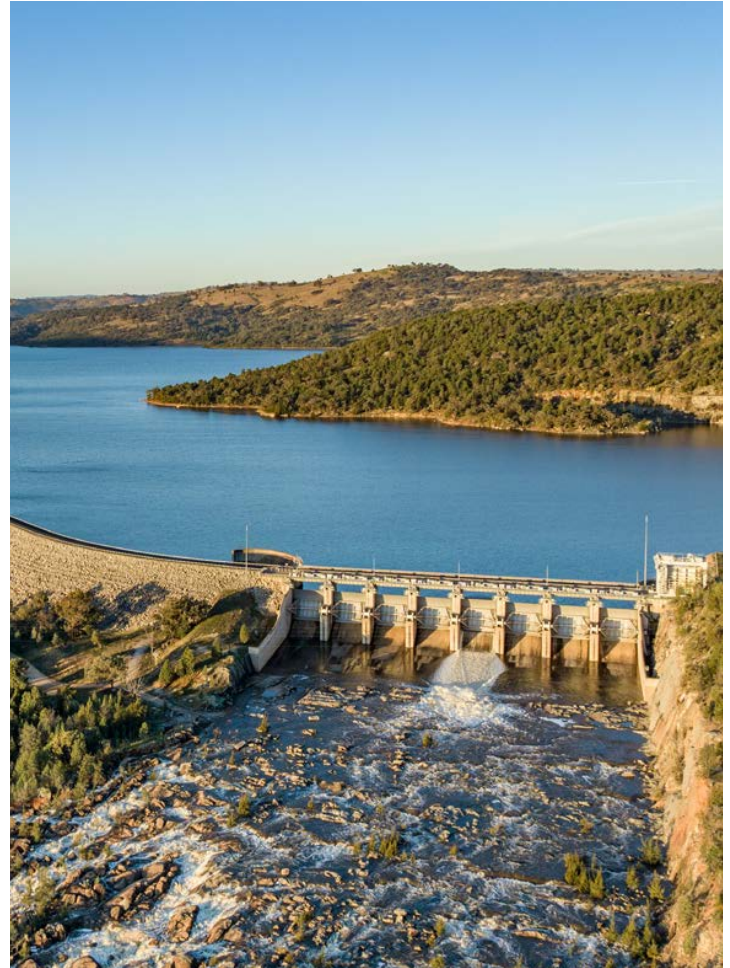



263 Calls in 743 Calls out




408 Page followers
42,196 Page reach 2,520 Page visits


Data is cumulative from December 2021 when Facebook page was launched

799
Media stories



43,721
Webpage views



49
Complaints received to date

Unless stated otherwise, all stats are cumulative totals from January 2020 and are updated at the end of each month.