

Western Weirs



Gathering local input, feedback and knowledge

Since our last project update, we've continued meeting with far west councils, weir owners and other relevant government agencies and groups. These meetings have been valuable for helping develop the Western Weirs Strategic Business Case (SBC), along with the modelling, surveying and engineering work required to assess the benefits, options and risks of the project.

Local knowledge and feedback is important, even in this early stage of the program, and we appreciate the feedback we have received to date on water security and quality, weir infrastructure and ownership, and the important social and cultural concerns of the communities in this region.

Engaging with Aboriginal stakeholders and community groups

Engagement and input from Aboriginal stakeholders and communities is a key priority for the Western Weirs Strategic Business Case and we are working to develop the best approach for engagement with the region's communities.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, engagement with Aboriginal communities and general community groups is now scheduled for early 2021. This also aligns with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE)-Water's consultation schedule so we plan to deliver it jointly and reduce the consultation fatigue for communities.

WaterNSW is looking forward to consulting with community groups and Aboriginal stakeholders in early 2021 where we will ensure a COVID-19 safety plan will be in place to meet all NSW Health requirements.

Project snapshot

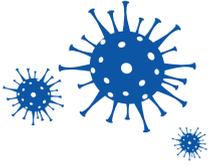
The Western Weirs program is taking a holistic approach to the management of weirs in the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling river systems to improve water security and sustain communities and economies in the far west region.

There are many weirs along this river system and the current infrastructure is known to have a number of deficiencies. These include poor condition of weirs, no system level functionality, flow regulation limitations, town water supply and water security concerns, and unclear responsibility or maintenance of structures.

The program is currently in its initial stages: WaterNSW is developing a strategic business case (SBC) to assess the options, risks and benefits of taking such an approach.

The Western Weirs SBC is funded under the state government's Restart NSW Water Security for Regions program, which aims to help regional communities improve water security.

WaterNSW is working closely with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) to develop the SBC. The Western Weirs program aligns with the development of DPIE's Western Regional Water Strategy and working together will ensure the SBC will also be reflected in the regional water strategy as one of the key projects for the western region. As part of this approach, we've been collaborating on all stakeholder engagement, including attending and participating in all interviews held to date.



COVID-19 and what it means for the Western Weirs project

Meeting with stakeholders face-to-face and providing equal opportunities for all to be consulted is an important part of our engagement approach. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, and to ensure communities and the project team remain safe, WNSW has been following COVID-19 government directives relating to travel, public gatherings and social distancing.

This has meant that all face-to-face engagement activities, starting from March 2020, have been re-designed and adapted where possible, to an online environment. This includes using digital platforms and phone interviews – all of the meetings with councils and weir owners have been held in this way.

In the meantime, the project team has been continuing, where possible, to progress the necessary engineering, modelling, surveying and assessment work for the SBC. These activities are also currently limited by the COVID-19 restrictions and the team’s abilities to be on site and travel regionally with safe arrangements in place.

What is a strategic business case?

A strategic business case (SBC) is an initial assessment carried out at the beginning of a program to determine whether there is justification to progress to a more detailed stage, known as a final business case (FBC).

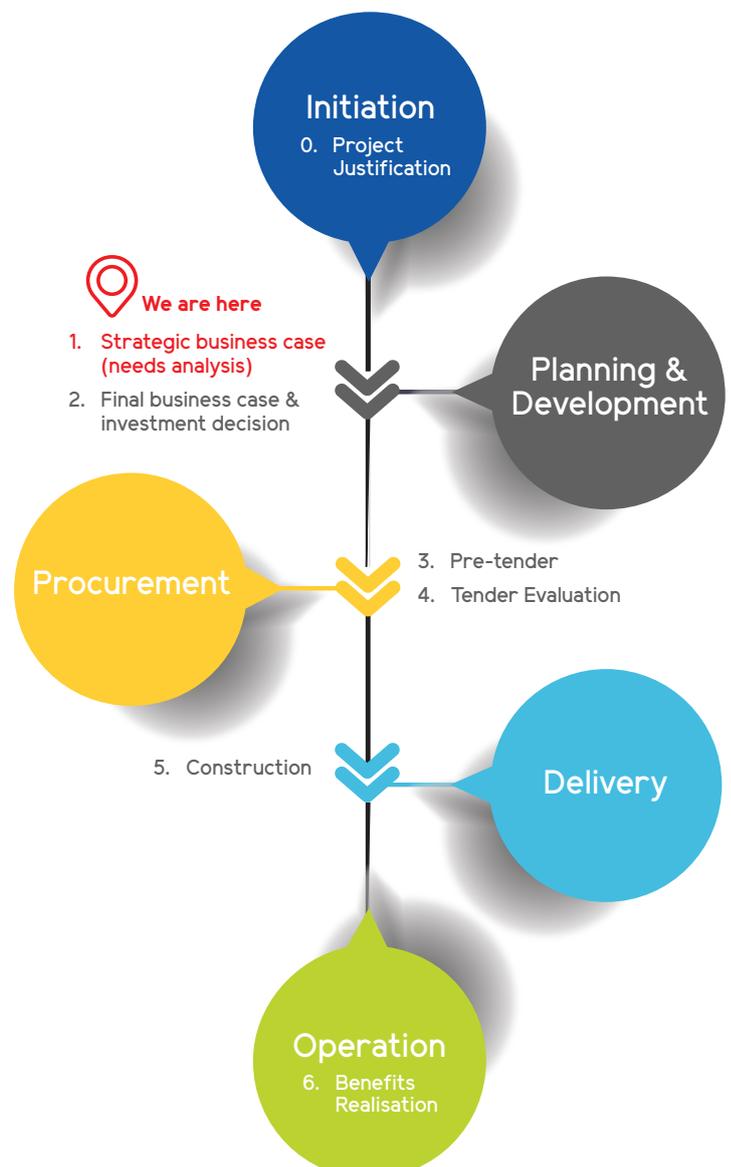
An SBC is the first phase of the Infrastructure NSW gateway review process and includes independent expert reviews.

The Western Weirs SBC will investigate both build and non-build options. For example, it may investigate new weirs or changes to existing policies.

Once completed, an SBC will provide an understanding of the options that may be developed and analysed further, via the FBC process if this is funded to progress.

The Western Weirs program is currently funded to complete the strategic business case. Funding for the final business case and beyond will be subject to government review and recommendation.

INSW Project Gateway Stages



Frequently asked questions

Which weirs are being investigated in the study?

There are currently 28 weirs that have been included in the study area under the following principles:

- Weirs are located on the main stem river of the Barwon-Darling or Lower Darling rivers in NSW between Mungindi and Wentworth.
- A weir that is on a tributary to the Barwon-Darling River and its primary purpose is potable drinking water supply for local towns, or its proximity to the Barwon-Darling River provides an opportunity to investigate improved system functionality and environmental flows.

Which weirs are being considered for possible replacement with gated structures or for other major changes?

As the strategic business case is still in the options assessment phase, it is still to be determined which of these 28 weirs, if any, will be considered for further changes.

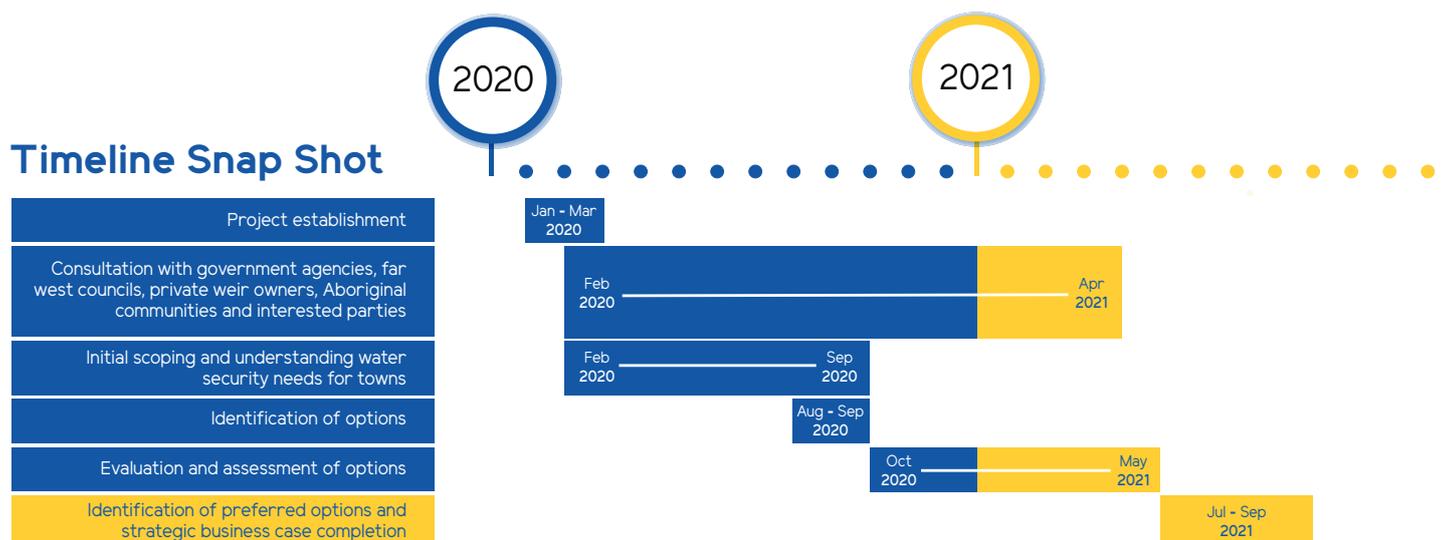
Are fishways being considered as part of this program?

Fishways are proposed for all new weirs or existing weirs that are changed as part of the project.

If you have further questions about the Western Weirs program you might find the answer in our **Frequently Asked Questions** now up on the Western Weirs webpage. Alternatively, you can contact the project team via the details at the bottom of this page.

Next steps at a glance

- Continue preparing the SBC for submission to the NSW Government.
- The timeline, as illustrated below, is subject to change due to the impacts of restrictions from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Aboriginal and community groups engagement planned for early 2021 when it is hoped that COVID-19 restrictions lift and face-to-face consultation is safe for communities and the project team.
- Continue engineering, modelling, surveying and assessment work after the lifting of restrictions.



Keep in touch

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