

Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project

Project update | December 2023

Weir and fishway update

Work is progressing on the Wilcannia Weir Replacement Project with the Australian and NSW Governments remaining committed to constructing a new weir and fishway ~5 km downstream of the existing weir in Wilcannia.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment's Water Group has investigated a range of different construction approaches to identify the most effective method for building the new weir and fishway.

As a result, the design of the weir and fishway has changed following comprehensive assessments of the weir's previous design and stakeholder and community feedback.

The new weir will now be a sheet-pile, clay core and rock-fill weir at the same height as the existing failing weir. It will be a fixed crest type weir and will be approximately 5 m high. Unlike the old weir, it will include fish passage.



Artist impression of the new weir and fishway in normal flow mode.

The fishway will now be a vertical-slot type fishway and will be constructed next to the northern bank of the river to allow fish to migrate upstream past the weir itself.

The decision to change the weir and fishway design was made to provide value for money, improve site safety and minimise its impact on the environment and culturally significant sites in the area, while still providing water security for the community.

Construction work is set to begin on the new weir and fishway at the end of 2024, with a completion date of 2026.

While the design of the weir and fishway has changed, other early works components of the project remain the same and are complete or well underway.

Sewerage upgrade (stormwater mitigation) works underway

Work has started to upgrade parts of Wilcannia's sewerage system to prevent sewage from getting into Wilcannia's stormwater drains and ending up in the Darling-Baaka River.

The upgrade involves installing new back-up pumps and pipework for the town. Once installed these pumps will provide automatic back up (via a diesel-powered engine) to the existing pumps should they fail at any point.

Construction company, Pensar, has been hired to undertake the work, which is expected to be completed by mid-2024.

Site investigation assessments

From June to August 2023, we completed a series of site investigation assessments at the new weir site to help inform the weir design.

On-ground assessments were conducted and involved collecting soil samples and drilling holes on the northern and southern bank of the Darling-Baaka River to analyse ground conditions.

We also carried out on-water assessments to gather information about the riverbed near, and at, the new weir location. These on-water assessments were conducted by boat without disturbing the bottom of the river or the animals living in it.

We also did further site assessments using aerial drone and scanning technology to assess in greater detail the current and new weir sites, and parts of Union Bend Road, to inform the final weir design.

A local community member attended these assessments to provide cultural monitoring.



Community River Place (Ngatji Hole) design process underway

We are currently working on the final design of the Community River Place.

The need for a Community River Place was raised during our discussions with the Wilcannia community. The site will provide an important recreational area for locals, a place where the community can gather to share stories, fish and swim.

We will be holding workshops over the coming months with community representatives to discuss the concept design for the site and to get community feedback to input into the final design.

The first workshop will be held in Wilcannia in early December 2023.

Progress on Union Bend Road upgrade

We are also progressing more site investigations at the southern end of Union Bend Road, after the first stage of the Union Bend Road upgrades were paused last year due to the wet weather.

These assessments seek to capture existing utilities, emergency bore pump units and inground pits. This information is needed to build a vehicle turning area at the southern end of the road.

Once complete, the road upgrade will allow vehicles and machinery access to build the new weir structure and will eventually become the main access road to the new weir and also the Community River Place recreational area.

Find out more

For more information about the project:

Visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/wilcannia-weir

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