

Cawndilla Creek Enhancement

The proposed Cawndilla Creek Enhancement initiative is part of a new Better Baaka Program.

About the Better Baaka Program

The NSW Government is investigating a range of measures for the Darling-Baaka River system as part of rescoping the Menindee Lakes project. These measures are part of a new Better Baaka Program.

Following Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meetings in 2021, Water Infrastructure NSW has rescoped the Menindee Lakes Sustainable Diversion Limits Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) project and investigated options that might be supported by the community.

Our initial focus has been to evaluate the years of community feedback regarding the need to improve connectivity, environmental, cultural and community outcomes.

We know these issues can only be addressed by taking a holistic, system-wide approach to water infrastructure planning and operations, working in tandem with changes in water policy and strategy. We also know that feedback from our stakeholders and communities is critical to ensuring we progress the best options for delivering outcomes.

Feedback has been collected through a major consultation and engagement program which will enable us to work side-by-side with communities to investigate solutions to create a better Baaka. This is a shift towards beneficial outcomes for communities and the environment.

The options are being investigated by the project team, most of which are still in the planning stages. Community feedback and input will play a crucial role in shaping which initiatives are progressed, and what these initiatives look like, to deliver a better Baaka.

About the proposed Cawndilla Creek Enhancement initiative

Cawndilla Creek is an area rich in First Nations history lying between Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla. It is of great importance to Water Infrastructure NSW that the Cawndilla Creek enhancement takes into consideration the significance of the site and the need to reduce impacts on the cultural heritage of the Traditional Owners, the Barkindji people.

We know that any work at Cawndilla Creek can only be carried out with the support of its Traditional Owners, which is why we are keen to better understand what options might work, and the cultural impacts that would need to be managed to deliver enhancements at this important site.

The proposed enhancement initiative would look at options of a Cawndilla Creek weir and pipeline to maintain a reliable flow of water into Cawndilla Creek, which connects Lake Menindee with Lake Cawndilla.

This would aim to:

- allow separate management of Lake Menindee and Lake Cawndilla
- maintain almost permanent water in Cawndilla Creek
- supply water to Cawndilla Creek in times of low flows, with the water supplied from a strategic purchase of 1GL of horticultural water from a willing seller
- enable and support the Cultural Environment Educational Centre for Tourism.

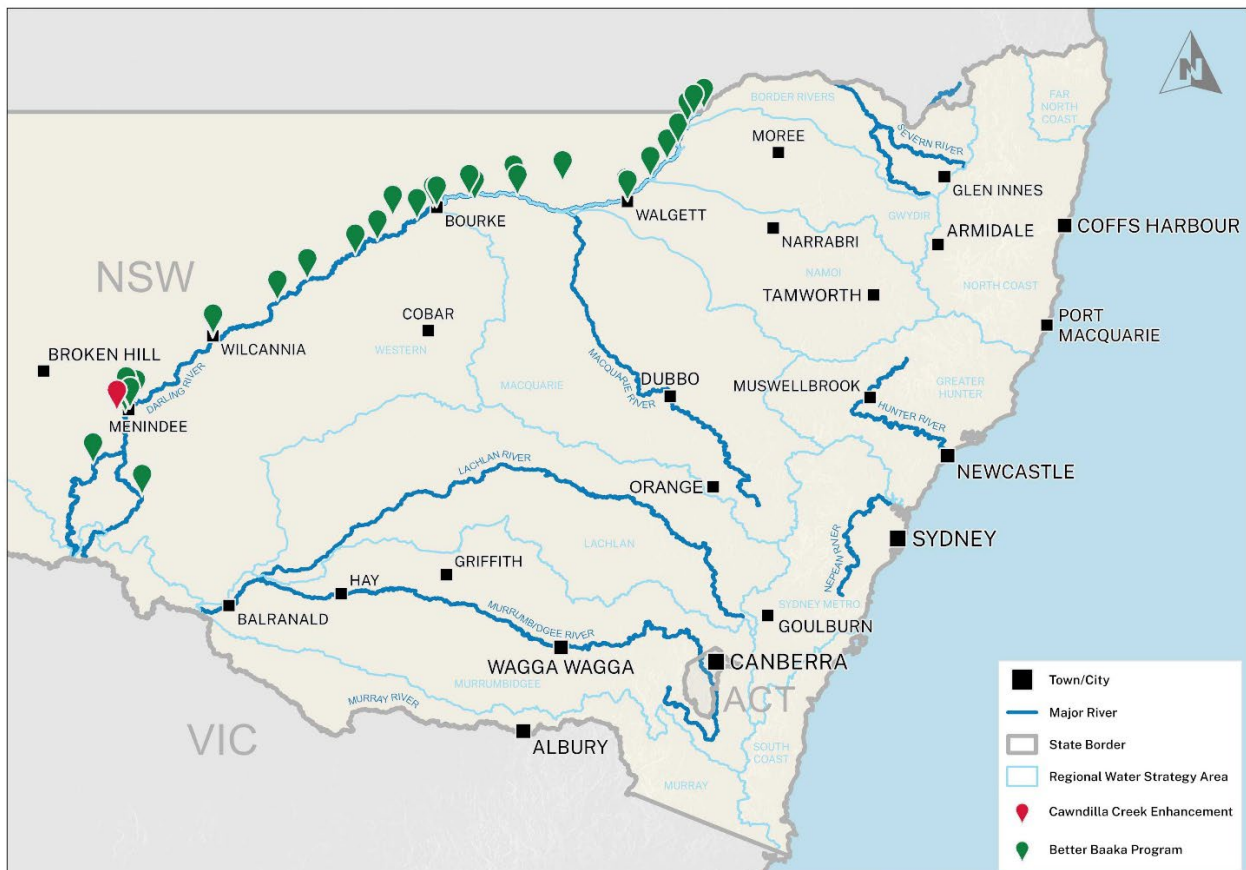
Potential benefits

Enhancements at Cawndilla Creek have the potential to improve the health of the creek and the overall Menindee landscape. The project may provide cultural, social and economic outcomes including:

- improving the health of Cawndilla Creek if appropriate strategies can be put in place to mitigate potential risks such as alien fish and water quality issues
- committing to establishing Menindee Aboriginal community employment by employing a team of rangers through the expansion of the River Rangers Program
- establishing infrastructure to build tourism in the area.

Initiative map

The location for the proposed Cawndilla Creek Enhancement initiative is shown in the map below.



Engagement with First Nations people

We recognise and acknowledge the unique relationship and deep connection to country that First Nations people have as the Traditional Owners and First Peoples of Australia.

The wisdom and experience of First Nations communities will play a critical role in informing the development of initiatives and approach to the Better Baaka Program and especially with any enhancements at Cawndilla Creek.

We have a dedicated engagement team who will continue to guide our engagement with these communities, and we look forward to working together to deliver real, tangible and widely accepted outcomes.

Community engagement

Communities will be at the heart of the Better Baaka Program. We are committed to working in partnership to develop the program to deliver outcomes with broad community support.

We will provide numerous opportunities for local communities and stakeholders to have their say on the design of the program and throughout the development and delivery phases of any projects. This feedback will be a key input into decision making and will help shape the program's future design.

We are also keen to hear any alternative or additional ideas local communities may have to deliver better economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for local communities and the environment across the Darling-Baaka river system.

We will be reaching out to local communities soon to discuss the proposed ideas making up the Better Baaka Program. Upcoming engagement and partnering opportunities will be listed on the [Better Baaka webpage](#) and also on our [stakeholder engagement page](#).

Find out more

For more information on the Better Baaka Program:

- call 1300 081 047
- email our engagement team at better.baaka@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- visit dpie.nsw.gov.au/better-baaka