

Better Baaka Program

Water for Cultural and Environmental Outcomes



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 (the program).

Following the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting in April, 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 focus over the past few months has been evaluating 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.

We have recently launched 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 currently being investigated by the project team, most of which are in the very early stages of planning. 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 Water for Cultural and Environmental Outcomes initiative

The Baaka catchment includes the Northern Intersecting Streams which support native fish populations, tourism, recreation, along with the cultural values and practices of local First Nations communities.

Water Infrastructure NSW is consulting with stakeholders and the community on the opportunity to undertake a strategic purchase 15GL of water licences from a willing seller in the Northern Basin to improve connectivity.

To achieve the connectivity benefits between the northern tributaries and Barwon-Darling it would be necessary to formalise cross border accounting arrangements for environmental water. These issues will be explored further as part of the next stage.

Potential benefits

We are likely to see significant benefits through the management of First Nations and Traditional Owners cultural and environmental outcomes.

These would include:

- greater connectivity between northern tributaries and the Barwon-Darling systems

Better Baaka Program

Water for Cultural and Environmental Outcomes



- improved cultural outcomes in new locations.

Initiative map

The location for the proposed Water for cultural and environmental outcomes initiative is shown in the map below.



Stakeholder 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 economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for local communities and the environment across the Darling-Baaka river system.

Better Baaka Program

Water for Cultural and Environmental Outcomes



In October 2021, we will commence talking to local communities on 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](#).

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.

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

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

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