

Water

Minister for Climate
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Key contacts



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ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the balance

- Central policy guiding ACT and regional water policy
- Long-lasting impacts through commitments and the associated implementation plan
- Delivered by various directorates and Icon Water
- Refresh of the ACT Water Strategy and Implementation Plan
 - Updated arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting outcomes
 - Comprehensive consultation with the Ngunnawal and other connected families has extended the finalisation of the refresh

Upcoming Milestones

- 10-year review and 5-yearly Implementation Plan update to be provided to Cabinet in Q2 2025



ACT Water Strategy 2014-44: Striking the balance

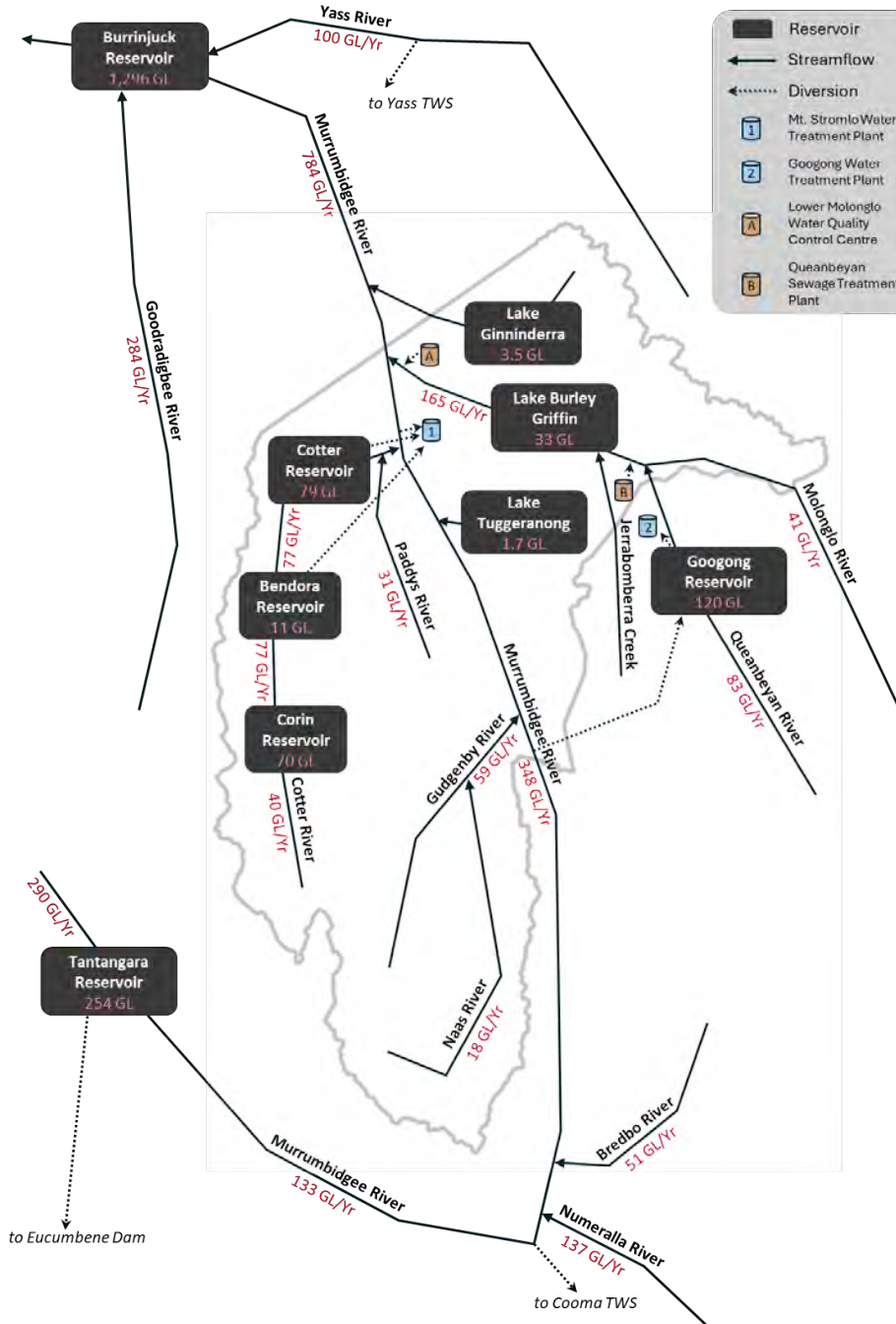
Key Changes to Draft Refreshed Strategy

- **Vision:** “Working together, managing water wisely for a vibrant, sustainable and thriving region.”
- **New Outcome Area:** Caring for Water with Ngunnawal people. Ngunnawal as partners in water planning, policy and management
- **New Aspiration Statements:** High-level strategic direction over 20 years for each outcome area
- **Monitoring Evaluation & Reporting:** Aligned with the Wellbeing Framework

Related Work

- Icon Water: Public engagement options to augment Canberra’s water supply
- National Water Agreement (NWA):
 - Formerly National Water Initiative (NWI) - Renewed by Australian Government.
 - Will require ACT to develop an Implementation plan
 - Potential additional public consultation on NWA prior to or during Draft Water Strategy refresh

Water Resources in the ACT and Region



Federal Funding Agreements

Funds were allocated to the ACT in two agreements were executed in September 2024 for grants:

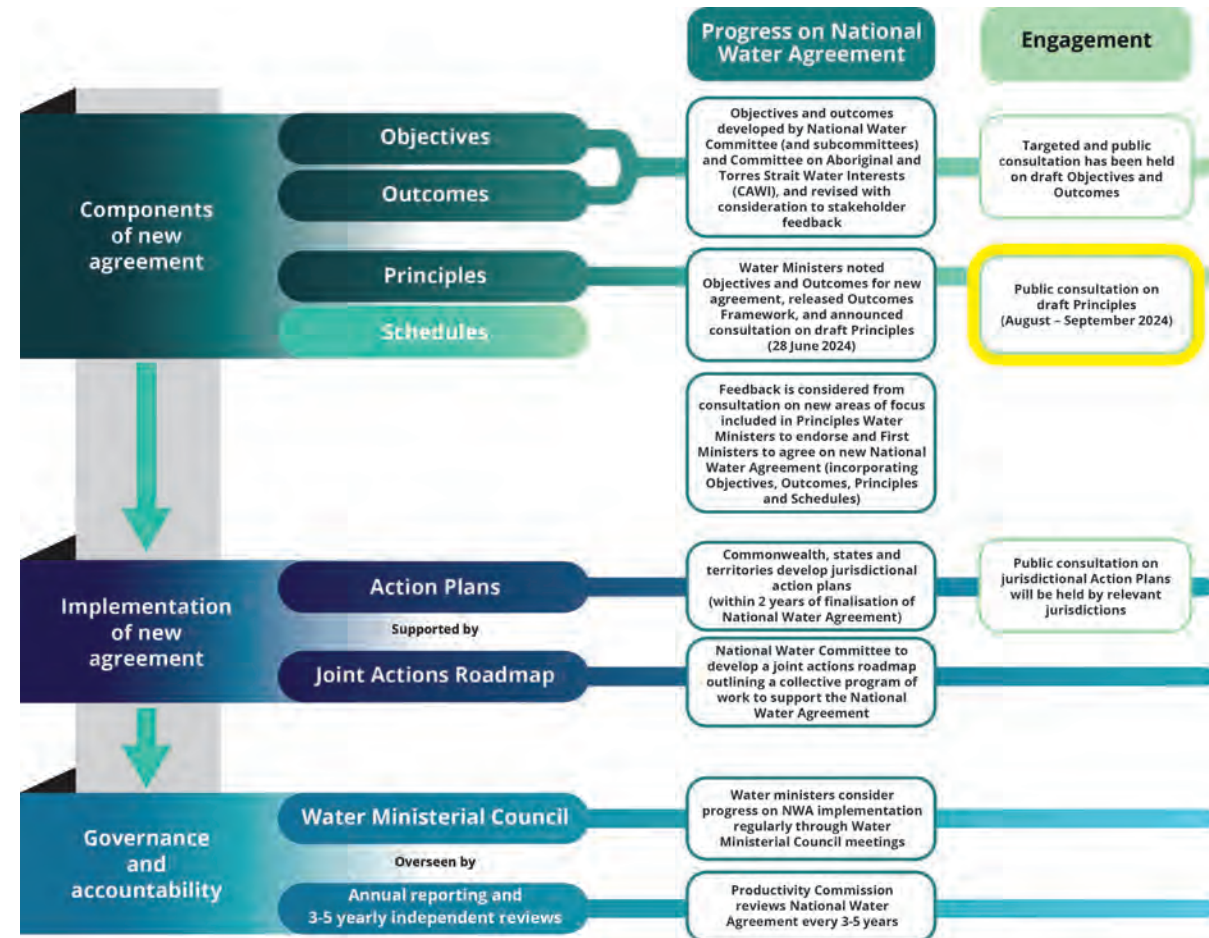
- 1) \$2.6 million for *Implementing Water Reforms in the Murray-Darling Basin* (to 30 June 2028).
- 2) \$7.58 million for *Restoring the upper Murrumbidgee River Program* (to 30 June 2029).

Early Cabinet agreement is required to release the funding.

- Payment of funding is based on delivery of activities against individual KPIs listed within the schedules.
 - c) Non-delivery of any KPI will result in a partial reduction in the funding received.
 - d) The dollar value assigned to each individual KPI are not tied to the Territory's spending on addressing the KPIs.

National Water Agreement

- The National Water Initiative (NWI) is the shared intergovernmental agreement that underpins the sustainable management of Australia’s water resources.
- The Australian Government is leading the refresh of the NWI (now the **National Water Agreement NWA**).
- The Australian Government have informed the states and territories that:
 - Minister Plibersek will write to Water Ministers with a final draft of the agreement in November 2024
- The draft Agreement will need to be considered by **Cabinet**, and the **legal and/or financial** implications, if any, understood **prior** to ACT endorsement.
- EPSDD will continue to work with DCCEEW to ensure that the ACT’s views are appropriately captured and addressed.

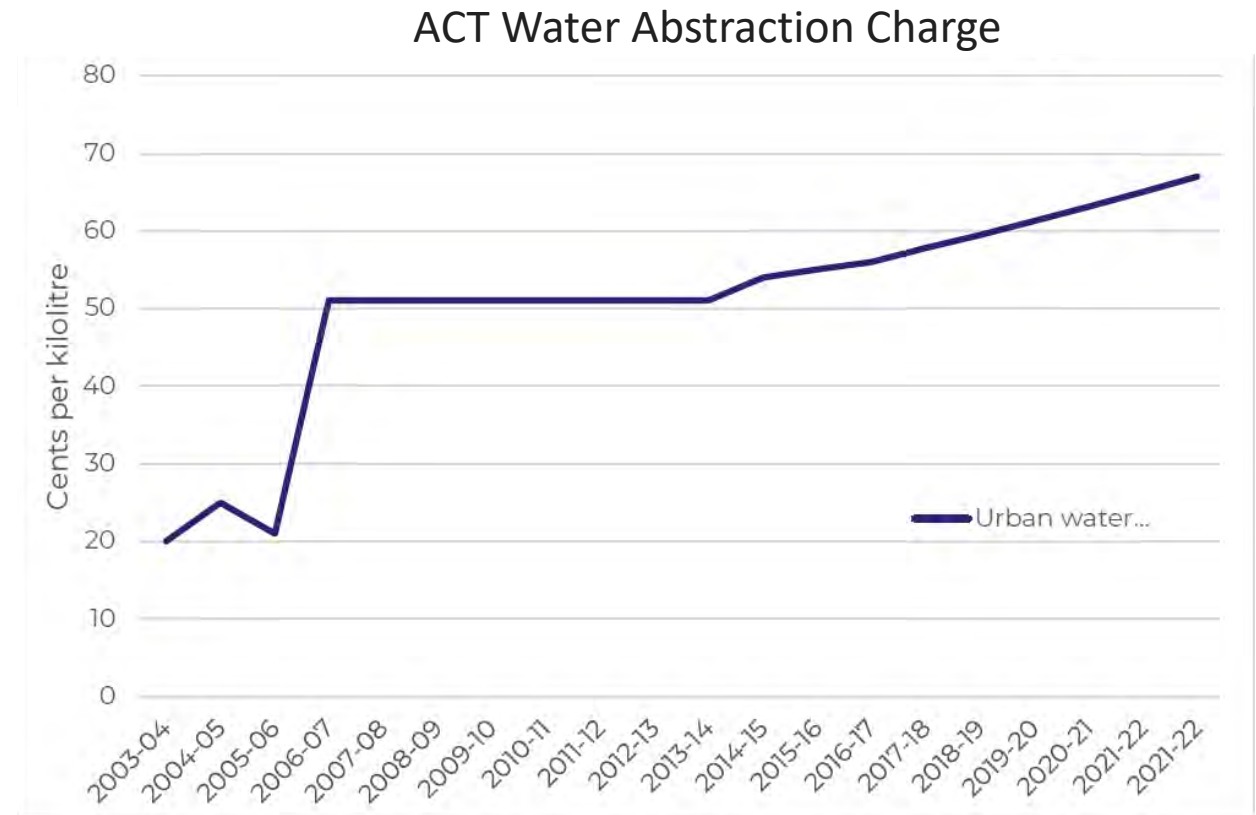


Water Abstraction Charge

The Water Abstraction Charge (WAC) is a charge applied to licences to Take Water.

The WAC is applied to recover costs of water management and governance such as catchment management to maintain water quality and environmental costs associated with taking the water.

Following a review, the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission (ICRC) has recommended an updated water abstraction charge (WAC) pricing methodology.



Water Abstraction Charge

Treasury and the EPSDD are continuing to work together on the government's response to the ICRC's review of the WAC methodology.

- Discussions at officer level have identified a need to an independent review of all water fees and charges determined under s107 of the Water Resources Act 2007.
- EPSDD and Treasury will collaborate to develop the 2025/26 budget detailing the rationale for further examination of the methodology proposed by the ICRC, along with implementation options for the WAC in 2025/26.
- The outcomes of the review will inform advice to government on the scope of any proposed changes to the WAC, along with any associated financial impacts.

WAC revenue is accounted for in the Territory's **consolidated revenue**. A reduction in WAC revenue would impact the Government's capacity to fund projects that help achieve other Government priorities and policy objectives

SnowyHydro

Two elements:

1. the Commonwealth funding to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River;
 2. NSW making water available in the upper Murrumbidgee equal to the volume of water provided by the ACT to cross border communities
- In December 2023, the Australian Government announced a \$50m package of funding to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River.
 - New measures to improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River, that include a Review of the Snowy Deed, will receive \$5.3m over 5 years to conduct the review and support First Nations participation (\$500,000).
 - The Snowy Deed, is the agreement between the Commonwealth, NSW and VIC that balances water supply and energy generation. Any changes could impact Victorian and NSW waters shares and any increase in releases of water into the upper Murrumbidgee River, will be contentious..



Map of Upper Murrumbidgee

SnowyHydro

The upper Murrumbidgee and Cross Border water Supply

- On the 8 October 2024, the NSW Minister for Water wrote to the ACT Chief Minister in response to the ACT Government's terms for the supply of urban potable water from ACT to neighbouring NSW townships.
- A non-negotiable term requires the NSW to make additional water available to the Territory from upstream sources, principally Tantangara Dam.
- The volume of water to be supplied by NSW to the ACT must result in no net impact on the availability of water to ACT from the supply of their urban water to NSW townships.
- Water would need to be made available to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River and for critical human need, not just when high flows provided excess flow.



*The Murrumbidgee River dried to pools in December 2019 - upstream of Tharwa Bridge.
Photo credit: Simon Lowes.*

Watertrading

The ACT Office of Water is in negotiations with NSW Government officials to progress interstate water trade arrangements between the ACT and NSW.

Interstate water trade arrangements will support the following:

Regional water security



Climate change adaptation and providing environmental water



Economic opportunities for Traditional Custodians and other entitlement holders



Setting up trade between the hydrologically linked ACT and NSW sections of the Murrumbidgee water source has been a topic of discussion at the interjurisdictional Water Trading Group since at least 2012. To be compliant with the current Federation Funding Agreement, there are several key timeframes that must be met (see next slide).

Upcoming dates

Key dates:



In September 2024, the ACT Chief Minister wrote to the NSW Premier to affirm the ACT Government's commitment to the development of an ACT-NSW Trade Framework.



From 1 July 2025, the ACT **must** facilitate the full utility of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's ACT water entitlements through trade.



Work to enable full retail two-way allocation/entitlement trade between the NSW and the ACT must be implemented by 1 July 2027.



The Office of Water is preparing a brief with further information for you on this matter, including a draft paper intended for Cabinet consideration by the end of 2024.

ACT HealthyWaterways What's in the program?

KEY PROJECTS

- Water quality evidence base
 - 5 catchments
- Trials & initial implementation
 - Constructed wetlands - improved designs & delivery of assets
 - Streetsweeping experiment
 - Leaf campaigns
 - Fertiliser program
- Cost-effectiveness of WSUD assets
- Naas-Gudgenby restoration

HEALTHY WATERWAYS PLANS

Naas-Gudgenby River

Lake Tuggeranong

Yerrabi Pond

Lake Burley Griffin

Lake Ginninderra

STATUS*

Delivered

Jun'25

Jun'25

Mar'26

Nov'26

*For public exposure
on YourSay

Opening of Belconnen Oval Wetland

- Opportunity for public event from the end of November
- Tours of site, with focus on national-first subsurface wetland element
- Residents and local stakeholders have been engaged and are very interested in project.



Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

