

Issues for Immediate Consideration

Water supply from the Snowy Hydro Scheme

Minister with responsibility for	Water
Matter Type	Decision (Further information to follow)
Action Required by	12/11/2024
Recommendation/s	Discuss a possible meeting with the NSW Minister for Water on the scope of the Snowy Deed review to support water security for supply to ACT and NSW regional towns.
Background	<p>The Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed (SWIOD), is the agreement between The Commonwealth, NSW and Victoria that details how water in the Snowy Hydro scheme will be used and shared between NSW and Victoria. The focus of the Deed is electricity generation, supply of water for irrigation and environmental water for the Snowy river. The SWIOD can be reviewed at anytime by agreement of the parties. However, the ACT is not party to the SWIOD or the Snowy Hydro Deed and has no influence on the release of water from Tantangara into the Murrumbidgee River upstream of the ACT. Securing agreement from both the Commonwealth and NSW to review the SWIOD and examine the flows into the Murrumbidgee is a significant achievement.</p> <p>In December 2023, the Australian Government announced a \$50m package of funding to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee River. Key activities included a river health and monitoring program, and review of the Snowy Deed.</p> <p>Watertrust Australia is independently facilitating a stakeholder workshop on 13-14 November 2024 to scope a review of the Snowy Deed. The workshop will include broad participation from governments (water, energy portfolios) and Ngunnawal, Murrumbidgee irrigation, community (ARRC), and academia stakeholders. The workshop report will be provided to the Australian Government and Snowy Deed parties (Victoria, NSW) in December 2024 to inform the review's scope.</p>

On the 8 October 2024, the NSW Minister for Water wrote to the 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 NSW to make additional water available to the Territory from upstream sources, principally Tantangara Dam. Meeting this requirement relies upon the scope of the Snowy Deed review to support water security; the NSW response does not address this requirement.

Key Stakeholders

NSW Minister for Water

Australian River Restoration Centre

ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group

Approved by

Deputy Director-General

Decision

- Noted *please discuss*
- Agreed
- Agreed (further information required)
- Not Agreed/Please discuss
- Responsible Minister to attend (further information required)
- Defer to Directorate

Minister Orr  Date 24 / 11 / 24

Improving the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee - DCCEEW.

In December 2023, the Australian Government announced a package of new measures to improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River, that included a Review of the Snowy Deed - \$5.3m over 5 years to conduct the review and support First Nations participation (\$500,000);

The Australian Government's investment package responds to local stakeholder concerns on the negative impacts from current water resource management to: water supply for human use under extreme climate events, threatened aquatic species, water quality (bacteria loads), and cultural values and uses. Key stakeholders in raising these issues are the Australian River Restoration Centre (ARRC) and the ACT and Region Catchment Management Coordination Group (an advisory group to the ACT Minister for Water legislated under the *Water Resources Act 2007*).

The review of the Snowy Deed, and increasing the release of water into the upper Murrumbidgee River, will be contentious – balancing trade-offs between water supply and energy generation, and impacts to Victoria and NSW water shares. Changes to the NSW and Victorian water shares will affect water availability for irrigation and other water users in the Snowy, Murrumbidgee and Murray river systems.

A workshop report will be provided to the Australian, Victoria and NSW governments (as Snowy Deed parties) to consider in setting the terms of reference for the Snowy Deed review. The ACT Government is not a party to the Deed and has no decision-making role in the review or outcomes.

ACT-NSW urban water supply

The ACT Government wrote to the NSW Premier on 4 September 2024 defining the non-negotiable terms for the supply of urban water to NSW townships from the ACT. The terms require additional water to be supplied by NSW to the ACT to the effect that urban water supply to NSW townships will have no net impact on the ACT water resource. For NSW to meet this term and supply this additional water to the ACT requires a change to the NSW Snowy Water Licence. This must be enabled through the review of the Snowy Deed. The NSW response to the ACT Government's letter acknowledges the scoping of the Snowy Deed review, however, not for the purpose of supporting urban water supply. Influencing the scope of the Snowy Deed review to include urban water supply requires support from the NSW Government.