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Department of Climate Change, Energy,  
the Environment and Water

# Draft Restoring Our Rivers Framework

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# Agenda

1. Managing water for the environment
2. Draft framework for delivering the 450 GL
3. Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program
4. Minimising socio-economic impacts
5. Sustainable Communities Program
6. Consultation - how to have your say
7. Questions





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# Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

- Statutory function under the Water Act 2007
- Partnerships critical to outcomes
- Currently have 2,887 GL of water entitlements – 2,001 GL LTAAAY
- Science shows we are achieving outcomes
- More to do – committed to enhancing environmental outcomes.





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# Draft framework for delivering the 450 GL of additional environmental water



# Restoring Our Rivers Act 2023

- *Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Act 2023* commenced 7 December 2023
- Providing more options, more time, more funding and more accountability to deliver the Basin Plan in full
- More ways to recover the 450 GL of water for the environment
- Gives statutory recognition to First Nations outcomes.



# Draft Framework for delivering the 450 GL

- Released 30 January 2024 for public consultation
- Sets out the various tools that can be used to deliver the 450 GL of additional environmental water
- Includes a proposed implementation approach for Year 1 - 2024
- Water recovery will be informed by three key principles:
  - **enhancing environmental outcomes**
  - **minimising socio-economic impacts**
  - **achieving value for money.**



# Draft Framework programs

The draft framework outlines 3 new programs that will be established to deliver the 450 GL target:

- 1. Resilient Rivers Program** - infrastructure projects, rules changes, land and water partnerships, and other ways to recover water
- 2. Voluntary Water Purchase** – purchase of water entitlements from willing sellers by the Commonwealth
- 3. Sustainable Communities Program** – community adjustment assistance for Basin communities impacted by voluntary water purchase.



# Water recovery in the northern Basin

- Tailored approach required
- Pursue infrastructure opportunities across the northern and southern Basins.

## Implementation timeline 2024

### NOW

- Land and Water Partnerships Expressions of Interest now open
- Resilient Rivers Program – Water Recovery Infrastructure Program now open

### NEXT

- NSW Independent Connectivity Expert Panel report on potential rule changes in the NSW northern Basin
- Work with Queensland Government to determine the right tools for water recovery.



# Water recovery in the southern Basin

- Tailored approach required
- Pursue infrastructure opportunities across the northern and southern Basins.

## Implementation timeline 2024

### **NOW**

- Land and Water Partnerships Expressions of Interest now open
- Resilient Rivers Program – Water Recovery Infrastructure Program now open

### **NEXT**

- Open targeted Voluntary Water Purchase excluding major irrigation networks
- Work with states and major irrigation networks on complementary voluntary water purchase and network rationalisation opportunities.



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# Resilient Rivers – Water Infrastructure Program



# Resilient Rivers - Water Infrastructure Program

- The **Resilient Rivers - Water Infrastructure Program** opened on 30 January 2024
- Provides a pathway for basin states to propose water saving, efficiency measures projects for funding
- Provides a more flexible approach for investment than previous programs to meet the 450 GL water recovery target.
- More information and supporting documents are available on our website.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/programs/open/rrwip>



# Proposed approach for water recovery in 2024

- Pursue infrastructure opportunities across the northern and southern Basins through the **Resilient Rivers Program** – program now open for states to apply
- Further engagement with industry, irrigation infrastructure operators and communities to inform **Sustainable Communities Program** design – public consultation now open
- Prioritise **Voluntary Water Purchase** options that have the least unintended socio-economic impacts





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# Minimising socio-economic impacts and Sustainable Communities Program



# Minimising socio-economic impacts

- We recognise that there may be unintended social and economic impacts from voluntary water purchase
- The draft framework outlines the water recovery guiding principle to minimise socio-economic impacts
- The **Sustainable Communities Program** will provide funding to help communities directly affected by water purchase to adjust to impacts
- We are gathering evidence to integrate into program design.

*Before approving a water purchase program for the 450 GL, the Minister must consider the socio-economic impact on communities*

Water Act section 86ADB



# Sustainable Communities Program consultation

To further develop the program, we are seeking feedback on:

- Draft Sustainable Communities Program principles
- Lessons learnt from previous water recovery programs and their impacts on communities
- How to capture local knowledge and apply it to practical approaches to minimising impacts
- Lessons learnt from previous community adjustment assistance programs
- What kind of investments in communities would mitigate potential impacts of water purchasing.



# Draft community adjustment assistance principles

## 1. Support diversification and resilience

- Support regional communities to prepare for and transition to a future with less water
- Focus on job creation and sustainable economies

## 2. Place-based

- Place-based and focused investment
- Engage local people as active participants in development

## 3. Proportionality

- Investment to each state proportional to water purchased
- Investment in each community proportional to impacts observed





# Draft community adjustment assistance principles

## 4. Co-design

- Co-design across government
- Consultation with communities, First Nations, local government, and regional industries

## 5. Strategic alignment

- Consistent with Commonwealth Regional Investment Framework.
- Aligned with regional and First Nations' priorities and plans.

## 6. Transparency and integrity

- Clear outcomes and objectives, and value for money.
- Transparency through administration and evaluation.

## 7. Evidence-based

- Underpinned by agreed evidence and data.





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# Consultation



# Public consultation on the draft framework

- Workshops and meeting with key stakeholders and groups underway
- Online survey open 30 January – 4 March 2024 and seeking feedback on:
  - **Understanding impacts on communities** - lessons learnt from previous water recovery programs, how to capture local knowledge and develop practical programs
  - **Sustainable Communities Program** – principles, lessons learnt from previous community assistance programs, suitable community investments
  - **Draft 450 framework** - overall views on the approach to delivering the 450 GL of additional environmental water
  - **Leasing opportunities** - interest in leasing water from or to the Commonwealth
  - **Land and water partnerships** - interest from potential sellers of land and water packages.



# Have Your Say

- We invite you to have your say on key parts of the draft framework
- Visit our consultation hub to access the draft framework, supporting information, and survey.
- <https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-restoring-our-rivers-framework>



Scan QR code to access DCCEEW consultation page

