



2021-22 EBM – Narran Lakes Water Reimbursement Project Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Closing date and time:	9.00 pm AEDT on 28 January 2022
Commonwealth policy entity:	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Administering entity	Community Grants Hub
Enquiries:	If you have any questions, contact Community Grants Hub Phone: 1800 020 283 (option 1) Email: support@communitygrants.gov.au Questions should be sent no later than 5.00 pm AEDT on 21 January 2022
Date guidelines released:	14 January 2022
Type of grant opportunity	One off ad hoc

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1. About the grant

The purpose of the grant is to support colonial waterbird breeding within Dharriwaa (the Narran Lakes Nature Reserve Ramsar site). Achieving this outcome involves paying a water allocation and/or licence holder(s) to release water from private storage to maintain the water level at the Back Lake gauge above 1.08m. The grant, if activated will help to manage the risk of waterbirds abandoning nests and chicks because the water level drops too quickly at the internationally significant site.

The grant is a continuation of the pilot (or 'interim measure') that was implemented in the Lower Balonne in early 2020. Lessons learned from both the 2020 pilot and this grant will support any future implementation of event-based mechanisms. Event-based mechanisms are a 'Toolkit measure' under the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Water Reform in the Murray-Darling Basin*. This grant contributes to the achievement of program 1.3: Commonwealth Environmental Water of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment's [Portfolio Budget Statement](#).

The objectives of the grant activity are:

- To protect and restore water-dependent ecosystems in the Murray-Darling Basin through the management and use of Commonwealth environmental water and manage Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention; and improve the knowledge of, and inform decision-making on, the impacts to and management of water-dependent ecosystems consistent with international and national obligations.
- To support the 2021-22 environmental watering priorities for the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's Basin annual watering priorities for 2021-22 recognised that Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes) is primed for waterbird breeding and recommended providing water to support colonial nesting waterbird breeding and recruitment. Queensland and NSW state annual watering priorities for 2021-22 also identified that flows to Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes) will further build habitat resilience.

The intended outcome of the grant activity is to support waterbird breeding within Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes).

This grant will be administered by the Community Grants Hub on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (the Department).

The grant is to be undertaken in accordance with the [Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines 2017 \(CGRGs\)](#).

2. Grant amount and grant period

A one-off amount of up to \$3.3 million (GST inclusive) is available for the Narran Lakes Water Reimbursement Project grant opportunity. Funding will be provided immediately following the agreed temporary storage reduction period when the quantity and quality of water released from privately owned farm storage(s) and on farm water balance is confirmed¹.

¹ The water released from storage must be done in accordance with the [Code of practice for the release of stored water from privately owned farm storages to receiving waters in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin](#), including water quality monitoring.

2.1 Establishing a price for water released from private storage

The price per megalitre of water released from private storage in Management Area LBU-05 (Narran River) will be established at least one week before the grant activation through an independent price assessment by consulting economists. The price will be calculated taking into account the market conditions at that time including time of the year, the crops that could be grown, the value of cotton seed as a potential stock feed, water prices in neighbouring regions, and discussions with water market advisors. The independent price assessment will be published on the Department's website.

This grant opportunity has been established as a one-off ad hoc grant. The Department considers that this is an appropriate type of selection process considering the nature of the grant is specifically aimed at supporting waterbird breeding within Dharriwaa (Narran Lakes), by providing water.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

To be eligible to receive a grant the potential grantee must:

- be a legal entity, able to enter into a legally binding agreement
- have an Australian Business Number
- be registered for the purposes of GST
- be a permanent resident of Australia
- have an Australian bank account

To be eligible to receive a grant, water allocation and/or licence holders must be located in Water Management Area LBU-05 (Narran River), which is the most suitable management zone to release water from private storage to maintain water levels at colony sites within the Narran Lake Nature Reserve.

No other water allocation and/or licence holders will be invited to apply as the location of their extraction points are not suitable for releasing water from private storage to maintain water levels at colony sites within the Narran Lake Nature Reserve.

2.3 Grant assessment

The grant would be activated if the Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) identifies that a waterbird breeding event is underway and there is a risk of the water level at the Back Lake gauge dropping below 1.08m. Partner agencies and monitoring providers will undertake regular risk assessments to inform the grant activation. Potential grant recipients will be required to confirm their water balance before and after releasing water from their storage, including: pump meter records; storage gauge meter readings, a property water balance before and after the grant was activated, and dated photographs of storages. Potential grant recipients will also have to demonstrate how they have complied with the [Code of practice for the release of stored water from privately owned farm storages to receiving waters in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin](#), including water quality monitoring.

If the potential grant recipient operates under the instantaneous volumetric limit (IVL) water sharing rule, a conversion would be applied for this interim measure. That is, if a water allocation holder participates in the grant and releases an agreed volume of water from their storage, they also agree to temporarily reduce their effective storage capacity (or IVL) to ensure there is not a growth in use across the Queensland Condamine Balonne Water Plan area. This reduction has the effect of acknowledging the intent of the grant, where a portion of the volume of water released is no longer available to the water allocation holder for an agreed period. The temporary reduction in capacity and the period for which it applies will be agreed in writing between the CEWO and the potential grant recipient before the grant is activated. The temporary reduction will be informed by an independent assessment of the volume of water to be released compared with the potential for that volume to grow a crop, including the planted area, monthly water demand, and monthly storage evaporation rate.

2.4 How to apply

Before applying, water allocation and/or licence holders in Management Area LBU-05 may want to consider moving from IVL accounting to multi-year accounting (MYA) to enable a seasonal assignment of water to the Commonwealth. A seasonal assignment under Queensland's Water Management Framework would be the CEWO's preferred option to secure the additional water. If a water allocation and/or licence holder in Management Area LBU-05 is not willing to move from IVL to MYA accounting, there is an opportunity to participate in this ad hoc grant.

Should you choose to participate in this grant, you are asked to respond to the Hub at three stages in this process, including the letters of invitation, acceptance, and agreement respectively. The purpose of each of these letters is set out below.

The Letter of Invitation is at the start of the grant process. It is like an expression of interest and an initial indication that you are prepared to abide by the conditions of the grant. To be eligible, you must respond positively to the Letter of Invitation, which has been provided with these Grant Opportunity Guidelines. A sample Letter of Agreement has also been included so that you can consider the conditions that will apply to any grant should you accept the offer.

The Letter of Acceptance is like a grant application from an eligible grant applicant (who has previously expressed their interest in participating by completing and returning the above mentioned Letter of Invitation). The Letter of Acceptance will be sent from the Hub to eligible grant applicants if the grant is activated. The Letter of Acceptance works as an application form and will seek information required by the Hub to assess your continuing eligibility for the grant as well as information that will be required to make the payment of the grant. Eligible grant applicants respond to the Letter of Acceptance after the agreed volume of water released from their storage has ceased. The grant applicant will also need to provide evidence of the volume and quality of water released².

² Water quality sampling is to be conducted prior to the event (including samples from within the water storage), shortly after commencement of release, during release (assuming release occurs for more than a week) and shortly (at least 5 days but no more than 14 days) after the release ceases in accordance with the [Code of practice for the release of stored water from privately owned farm storages to receiving waters in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin](#).

The Letter of Agreement is the final stage. It is a legally binding Grant Agreement with the Commonwealth and includes specific grant conditions that cannot be changed. It will also confirm the amount of funds you will be provided immediately following the agreed temporary storage reduction period. The Letter of Agreement will be sent when the grant sum is agreed (based on the information that the eligible grant recipient(s) provided with the Letter of Acceptance). The Letter of Agreement is a contract between the Department and eligible grant recipient that the grant sum will be paid.

The grant process is summarised in the table below.

Date	Activity
14 January 2022	The Hub sends the Letter of Invitation, Grant Opportunity Guidelines (this document) and the sample Letter of Agreement to you.
Between 14 January 2022 and 21 January 2022	Questions can be directed through the Hub. Any technical questions will be provided onto the CEWO.
21 January 2022 (5 pm AEDT)	Question period ends.
28 January 2022 (9 pm AEDT)	Closing date and time for your response to the Letter of Invitation to be received back at the Hub. If you respond positively to the Letter of Invitation, you are an eligible grant applicant.
When (and if) the grant is activated (to be determined by CEWO).	The eligible grant applicant receives a Letter of Acceptance (which is a grant application form) from the Hub if the water level at Back Lake drops below 1.25m and CEWO confirm a high risk of abandonment and/or reduced success without additional water based, on a risk assessment by monitoring providers. CEWO staff hold teleconferences with eligible grant applicants once the grant has been activated to discuss release strategy.
After release of water from storage ceases and evidence of volume and quality of water released is provided to CEWO.	After releases from the private storage have ceased, the eligible grant applicants submit the Letter of Acceptance, with evidence to support the grant sum claimed. This is like a grant application. When the Letter of Acceptance is accepted by the CEWO and the Hub, the Hub provides a Letter of Agreement (which includes an agreement on the amount of funds to be paid) to eligible grant recipients that had released water from private storage for signature and return. Payment of the grant would be based on this Letter of Agreement and the supporting evidence provided with it.
Immediately following the agreed temporary storage reduction period.	Immediately following the agreed temporary storage reduction period, the eligible grant applicants submit evidence with the signed Letter of Agreement demonstrating that they have complied with the agreed temporary storage reduction period. The Hub releases payment of the grant amount approved by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's delegate to each eligible grant recipient.

All responses to these letters are to be sent to the Hub (support@communitygrants.gov.au). Please include 2021-6795 – Narran Lakes Water Reimbursement Project in the subject line

of the email response. Please keep a copy of all submissions. The Hub may be contacted on 1800 020 283.

2.5 Grant acceptance requirements

In the letter of acceptance, you will be asked to attach evidence of the amount of water that you have released from storage, including: pump meter records; storage gauge meter readings, a property water balance before and after the grant was activated and dated photographs of storages. You will also need to demonstrate that you have complied with the [Code of practice for the release of stored water from privately owned farm storages to receiving waters in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin](#), including water quality monitoring.

2.6 Late response to the Letter of Invitation

You (as the invited water allocation and/or licence holder) may request that the Hub allow you to submit a late response to the Letter of Invitation. The request should include an explanation of the circumstances that prevented the Letter of Invitation being submitted prior to the closing time in Section 2.

The Delegate or their appointed representative will determine whether a late response to the Letter of Invitation will be accepted. The decision of the delegate will be final and not be subject to a review or appeals process. Once the outcome is determined, the Hub will advise the applicant if their request is accepted or declined.

3. Who will approve the grant?

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's delegate (the decision maker) will make the final decision to approve a grant.

The decision maker's decision is final in all matters, including the:

- approval of the grant
- grant amount to be awarded
- terms and conditions of the grant.

4. Notification of the grant

Following a decision by the decision maker, the Hub will advise you of the outcome. The Hub will also advise you of any specific conditions attached to the grant in the Letter of Acceptance (which is the grant application).

4.1 Grant payments and GST

Payments will be GST Inclusive. If you are registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), where applicable, we will add GST to your grant payment and issue you with a Recipient Created Tax Invoice.

Grants are assessable income for taxation purposes, unless exempted by a taxation law. We recommend you seek independent professional advice on your taxation obligations or seek

assistance from the Australian Taxation Office. We do not provide advice on your particular taxation circumstances.

5. Announcement of the grant

Your grant will be listed on the [GrantConnect](#) website no later than 21 days after the date of effect as required by Section 5.3 of the CGRGs. Your grant may also be identified on the CEWO website.

6. Privacy

We treat your personal information according to the [Privacy Act 1988](#) and the [Australian Privacy Principles](#). This includes letting you know:

- what personal information we collect
- why we collect your personal information
- who we give your personal information to.

Your personal information can only be disclosed to someone else for the primary purpose for which it was collected, unless an exemption applies.

The Australian Government may also use and give out information about grant applicants and grant recipients under this grant opportunity in any other Australian government business or function. This includes disclosing grant information on GrantConnect as required for reporting purposes and giving information to the Australian Taxation Office for compliance purposes.

We may share the information you give us with other Commonwealth entities for purposes including government administration, research or service delivery, according to Australian laws.

As part of your application, you declare your ability to comply with the *Privacy Act 1988* and the Australian Privacy Principles and impose the same privacy obligations on officers, employees, agents and subcontractors that you engage to assist with the activity, in respect of personal information you collect, use, store, or disclose in connection with the activity. Accordingly, you must not do anything, which if done by the Department Environment would breach an Australian Privacy Principle as defined in the Act.