

## About Us

### Why and in what context was the LRWG formed?

The Lachlan Riverine Working Group is one of five [environmental water advisory groups](#) (EWAGs) in NSW which advise the NSW Government on environmental water (e-water) management activities in their respective valleys. The Lachlan Riverine Working Group (LRWG) was formed in January 2009 to coordinate the distribution of environmental flows in the Lachlan Valley based on beneficial ecological outcomes and appropriate water management.

In November 2009, the Lachlan River ceased to flow below Condobolin, after more than 10 years of 'dry or drought' conditions. The cumulative effect of the Millennium Drought against a historical backdrop of altered flow regimes and land management had left many riverine assets, values and functions in poor to critical condition. In addition, three statutory EWAGs (Macquarie, Gwydir and Murrumbidgee) had already been formed in 2007. Thus, the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (CMA) and Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) initiated the independent (non-statutory) formation of the LRWG for (i) effective emergency and transparent long-term e-water management, and (ii) in recognition of the value of establishing a means for capturing and incorporating local knowledge and experience into existing consultation and feedback mechanisms, and for delivering cooperative management plans. Thus, the LRWG is a locally based, diverse stakeholder group, which has been instrumental in both maintaining drought refugia, and beyond the drought, in improving the efficacy of e-water delivery and informing the development of annual watering plans (AWPs) and objectives.

### Membership and roles of the LRWG?

The membership of the LRWG includes the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority, which provides administrative support and inter-agency liaison, the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, the NSW Office of Water, Department of Primary Industries (Fisheries), State Water Corporation, and Aboriginal, community (including consumptive water users) and landholder representatives. To remain independent, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, as part of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, has an observer role within the LRWG.

Specifically, the roles of the LRWG include:

- identifying issues relating to the allocation, accounting and management of the environmental water provisions in the Water Sharing Plan for the Lachlan Regulated River Water Source 2003 or other allocated environmental water;
- providing input to water delivery strategies that will integrate the management of environmental flows and river operations;
- reviewing river operations and policies in relation to the management of the environmental water allowance/s;
- identifying critical issues, which affect the management and effectiveness of the environmental water provisions;

- providing advice on other matters relevant to the sustainable management of high value wetlands and other riverine environments that are dependent on the water sources in the Lachlan Catchment; and
- communicating with the public and stakeholder groups through the media or other means on issues relating to environmental flows.

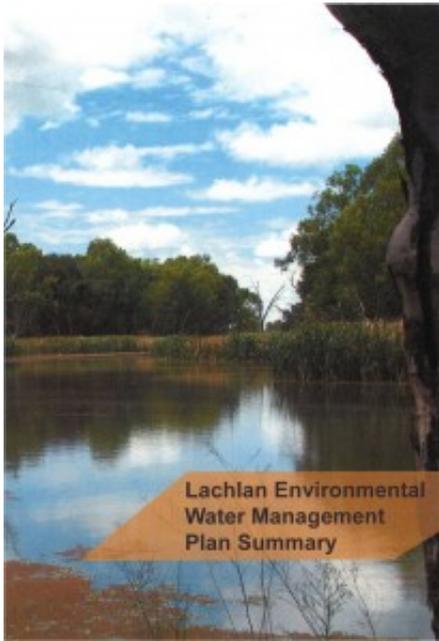
## **History of environmental water management in the Lachlan**

Prior to the formulation of the current Lachlan Water Sharing Plan, rules to provide water for the environment of the Lachlan River were first applied in 1992. The Lachlan River Management Committee was then established in 1997 to provide advice on environmental flows and formulate rules for environmental water. These rules were substantially revised after consultation with the Lachlan River Management Committee and were adopted and implemented by the NSW Government in 1998.

The Water Sharing Plan for the Lachlan Regulated River Water Source was formally gazetted on 21 February 2003 and amended on 1 July 2004. The plan is a legal document made under the [Water Management Act 2000](#) (the Act) and is implemented by the NSW Office of Water. The environmental provisions in the current Water Sharing Plan build on the earlier rules. The Lachlan Water Sharing Plan (WSP) was suspended in July 2004 due to severe drought conditions. The suspension allowed for drought management measures that are beyond the capacity of WSP, to be put in place. While the WSP was suspended and prior to the establishment of the LRWG, unregulated tributary flows were managed for the environment by the NSW Office of Water on advice from State Water and the Lachlan Customer Services Committee, of which The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage is a member. The Lachlan WSP recommenced on 16 September 2011.

## **History of the Lachlan Environmental Water Management Plan**

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The Water Sharing Plan for the Lachlan Regulated River sets out rules for the allocation and release of 'Planned' Environmental Water. However, the Water Sharing Plan does not provide direction for the management of licences committed as Environmental Water or the desired ecological outcomes and overall environmental objectives associated with its use.

Sources of licensed water for environmental purposes and LEWMP include Environmental Trust and RiverBank, held by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, and Commonwealth Environmental Water, held by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC). Cultural water may also be available to indigenous groups throughout the Lachlan.

The LEWMP was developed by the LRWG as a website or an interactive tool to collate all available wetland information, so it is easily accessible and can be regularly up-dated, which will assist the LRWG to list and prioritise riverine values and needs. This tool will support the appropriate delivery of environmental water through the reinstatement of a more natural flow regime and the restoration and maintenance of critical ecological functions and habitats. It will also help to communicate the process of delivering environmental flows and the outcomes from its delivery to the wider community.

Knowledge of ecological water requirements of the different water-dependent ecosystems that contribute to the character and values of the Lachlan is varied through the catchment. Little is known of many of the wetlands in the upper and mid catchments, while the lower catchment assets, particularly those listed as Nationally Significant, have considerable information to assist in the determination of their watering requirements. An assessment of the amount of water needed to maintain identified functions and habitats of the Lachlan Valley is crucial to appropriately managing Licensed Environmental Water to achieve desired outcomes.

The framework within the LEWMP not only addresses the delivery of both planned and licensed environmental water but other factors, including efficient water use. Thus, in addition, this website contains important background material that aims to help you understand the plan, it's history and purpose.

[LEWMP Summary](#)