

Improving water planning processes - priorities for the next five years in the Murray- Darling Basin

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How will the outcomes of the Basin plan be achieved?

- accredited water resource plans (2012 – 2019)
- Commonwealth \$
- E-water plans (2012?)
- a lot of collaboration
- *The benefits of the proposed reductions in water extraction depends on how well these are done.*

Some areas needing additional emphasis over the next five years

- Greater integration of groundwater and surface water management
- Greater integration of natural resource investment plans and water allocation plans
- Building resilience in the irrigation industry
- Improving the rigour and transparency of water resource planning
- Governance

Greater integration of groundwater and surface water management

- In the Basin more than 60% of groundwater systems highly connected to river systems
- Integrated management could expand options for water users, eg:
 - Cross system trade
 - Areas where increased gw use possible if river offsets allowed
- Currently at early stages of development
- BP does not constrain, but could drive through accreditation process

Greater integration of NR plans and water allocation plans

- Ecosystem preservation at risk if other threats not also addressed (channel modification, poor water quality, introduced species, loss of riparian vegetation, stock access, instream obstructions, catchment disturbance)
- Opportunity to coordinate NRM investment with water management through coordination of water plans and NRM plans
- Happening in some areas, but plenty of room for further development across the Basin
- Out of scope for BP, relies on collaborative effort

Building resilience in the irrigation industry

- Climate change scenarios – a range of plausible futures, not definite predictions
- New paradigm in water management is the focus on managing for future uncertainty
- Increased emphasis on hedging rather than maximising now needed
- WRPs can expand options available

Increased options through water management arrangements in wrps

- Water trade
- Holding water in reserve through:
 - System dams - regulated river system carryover
 - Aquifer storage – groundwater carryover
 - Aquifer storage – injection and recovery
 - On farm storages
- Unbundling – including capacity sharing
- Facilitating conjunctive use of multiple sources
- *Providing options should be a major strategy in WRPs, rather than a secondary issue*

Improving the rigour of water resource planning

- Planning an evolving discipline
- Opportunity to drive best practice through accreditation process
 - Robust assessments
 - Use of risk management approaches
 - Effective engagement
 - Well structured understandable plans with clear objectives and logic
 - Adaptable rather than rigid
 - Fair and transparent processes and decision making

Governance

- Coordination
 - Multiple state agencies?
 - Role of local govt? CMAs?
 - Water committees?
 - E-water owners and managers?
- Funding for planning?