

# Macquarie-Cudgong Environmental Flows Reference Group

## Meeting Minutes 24 March 2020 - Teleconference

**Attendees:** Ian Rogan (chair), Garry Hall, Rob McLellan, Melissa Gray, Sri Sritharan, Rodney Price, Bev Smiles, Mahmood Khan, Debbie Love, Jo ocock, Patrick Driver, Richard Woodlock

**DPIE EES Support:** Paul Keyte (Exec officer), Kieran Fitzpatrick (notes)

**Apologies:** Danielle Flakelar, Bill Johnson Rob Smith, Tim Haeusler, David Duncan

**Guests/Observers:** Nerida Sloane (CEWO), Hayley Behnke (CEWO)

**Meeting open 11:00am**

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

#### Update on recent flow and water availability

- February rainfall ranged from 50-300mm, March 50-100mm.
- Burrendong storage increased from 1.5% and is currently at 11.6% and holding 168GL.
- Windemere currently at 99GL or 26.8%. No environmental flow as the storage is less than 110GL storage capacity.

#### Burrendong bathymetry survey of dead storage

- 20GL less water based on survey results. Implications to resource availability. Capacity table still being reviewed but once completed will be adopted and EFRG notified.
- Realtime website show 'old storage' volume of 1190GL. Storage depletion curve is based on new storage capacity of 1170GL and RAS is looking at both.

#### Downstream Tributaries

- 2 distinct events, 1 mid-late February produced 73GL and March 22GL @ Baroona.
- Distribution of flow has been in accordance with the published "Principles for managing tributaries flow events". Adaptive management under water management act and priorities with input from EES and DPI Fisheries.
- 1st event declared 66hrs of Supplementary access and 14,000 ML extracted including 1,375 ML of environmental water ordered to stay in river at Marebone.
- February total at Marebone 34GL – represents ~40% of Baroona Flows, 20% extracted.
- 2nd event of 6hrs was recommended though not declared as supplementary access.
  - March total at Marebone 19 GL – represent 84% of Baroona Flow. Nil extracted.
- About 51 GL surplus downstream of Marebone. Not all that was available to the Marshes with extraction under supplementary licenses and floodplain harvesting take occurring downstream.
- All S&D replenishment flow are now complete except lower Crooked Creek with future inflows likely to be directed to complete the lower Crooked

#### North Marsh reedbed critical environmental needs

- DPIE Water is responsible for defining and making decisions about critical environmental needs. DPIE Water has a framework and applied it around the first event. In response to the first event, EES prepared additional information to feed into the decision framework, which is still evolving.
- Post wildfire support and recovery of the North Marsh reedbed has been identified as a critical environmental water need. Approximately 3,000 hectares burnt out in October 2019 following a lightning strike.

- EES has recommended to DPIE Water an inflow of 20-30 GL (measured at Pillicawarrina) over 3-5 months is needed to support the burnt reed bed.
- EES is monitoring the spread of water in the North Marsh reedbed against the target flow estimate and its intended outcome and use this information to refine the recommended volume.

### **Outlook**

- The Macquarie remains under drought Stage 4, though security for high priority users has improved. Some water sharing rules are still suspended they include, planned environmental rules, making of AWDs and availability of carryover.
- Similar to last year, AWD for 20/21 will be to meet critical water needs.

### **Planning**

While access restrictions to account water remains, reliance continues to be on tributary inflows below Burrendong Dam to support native fish populations and marshes between now and end of financial year. In priority order, the identified water needs are:

- North Marsh Reedbeds
- Mixed Marsh and Red Gum Woodlands
- Barwon River Connectivity

The EFRG identified environmental water demands also exists on the effluent creeks, mid-Macquarie and lower Macquarie River.

To support decision around distribution of possible tributary inflows, EES will prepare a summary of water demand priorities and likely actions for any flows between now and the end of the year. This will include an indication of how certain they will be carried out.

The EFRG will also bring forward its annual water planning to late April (normally mid-May) to align with Basin planning framework.

### **Macquarie re-regulating weir**

EES and CEWO have been engaged and participated in the formal planning process for the proposed re-regulating weir and raised issues they would like considered in the assessment. Separate sections within EES and CEWO deal with development assessment and approvals.

**Next meeting – Preliminary discussion of next year priorities 15 April teleconference**

**Final discussion of next year priorities 30 April teleconference**