



*Healthy Rivers,
Healthy Communities*

The Baawan–Baaka flows again

Cycles of 'boom' and 'bust' dominate the Barwon-Darling (Baawan–Baaka), with extended dry periods often broken by flooding rains. After years of drought, the Barwon-Darling River is once again flowing all the way from Queensland to the Murray River, providing crucial connection between the northern and southern halves of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The flows of December 2020, January 2021 and the flooding of March–April 2021 finally broke the driest four years on record, filling the river channel and spilling onto nearby floodplains. This comes off the back of a predominately dry decade since 2012 in the northern Murray-Darling Basin.

While the flows to date are a relatively short 'boom', with the natural river environment expected to take multiple years to recover, they will help to rejuvenate the landscape and communities after the long dry. More than 68 gegalitres of Commonwealth water for the environment has contributed to the flows over the 2020–21 water year.



The Barwon River at Dangar Bridge in Walgett on 25 March 2021. Photo: Jason Wilson, CEWO



Yellow belly. Artwork: created by Lakkari Pitt for the [Flow-MER Program](#). Copyright belongs to Lakkari Pitt.

Communities welcome flows

The hot and dry conditions of the past few years have affected communities deeply. In the words of Kelly Smith, who lives alongside the Barwon River at Collarenebri: “The last couple of years have been probably some of the hardest ones in my lifetime living on the Barwon...But now with that flow and a change in our season with great rainfalls, our river system has become the healthiest I have witnessed in a lot of years. There is an abundance of food sources and very, very healthy fish.”

Working together

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office and NSW Department of Planning Industry & Environment – Environment, Energy and Science manage held environmental water in the Barwon-Darling collaboratively to maximise environmental outcomes.

WaterNSW's [Water Insights Portal](#) provides key information on how water is being managed and shared within the Barwon Darling.

The CEWO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Murray-Darling Basin. We pay our respect to them and their elders both past, present, and emerging.



Native fish have been enjoying the flows too!

Since February, the Barwon-Darling has been flowing continuously all the way from Mungindi to Menindee – this is great news for native fish. Juvenile golden perch (yellow belly - or ‘dhagaay’ in Gamilaraay/ Kamilaroi language and ‘gagalin’ or ‘bidyin’ in Wiradjuri language) that were spawned in the northern Basin above Wilcannia have since floated down into Menindee Lakes. They have grown and matured, and then moved further afield again. This year’s flows helped these juvenile golden perch swim downstream of Menindee Lakes into the lower Darling and Murray systems.

Monitoring undertaken by NSW DPI Fisheries suggests that flows in the Barwon-Darling during 2020 supported spawning, growth, and movement of golden perch between Menindee Lakes, the main stem of the Barwon-Darling rivers and their tributaries. Following this year’s flows, we expect to see more golden perch moving around the Barwon-Darling rivers.

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For more information on water for the environment in the Barwon-Darling during 2020-21 scan the QR code:



This image, taken by CEWO's Jason Wilson, is of the Darling River downstream of Wilcannia on 20 May 2021 and shows flows spilling onto the floodplain. At the time of the photo, the river at Wilcannia was flowing at around 27,000 ML per day.