

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Tuesday, 19 January 2021 11:14 AM

**To:** Stacpoole, Tanya [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Subject:** Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program - input from CEWO Wetlands Section - Ramsar Wetlands [SEC=OFFICIAL]

Hi Tanya

The Wetlands team is keen to express interest in the development and roll out of the Murray Darling Healthy Rivers Program, given our national and international roles in the Ramsar wetlands space and our relationships with a range of wetland stakeholders within government, industry and the community. As such we offer the following input:

This program to improve the health of rivers, wetlands and floodplains will support Australia in meeting its commitments as a party to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. The Convention aims to stem the worldwide loss and degradation of wetlands. This is particularly pertinent in 2021 – the 50th anniversary of the Convention. Ramsar listed wetlands are also identified as a matter of national environmental significance under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Wetlands are among the ecosystems considered most vulnerable to the effects of climate change as they are sensitive to changes in rainfall and increased temperature and evaporation. Regardless of emissions reductions and other mitigation measures, impacts are locked in for the coming decades. Some aquatic species may no longer be able to exist at some locations and some may thrive and adapt if anthropogenic pressures are reduced. The principles of climate change adaptation should be embedded in the Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program so that its outcomes are sustainable in a future of reduced water availability in the Murray Darling Basin. The program application criteria could explicitly address this requirement by supporting activities leading to outcomes that will be sustainable under projected climate futures.

Projects that protect biodiversity through integrating adaptation actions could include:

- translocation of threatened species to or from a wetland site
- revegetating areas such as eroded riverbanks with species that are likely to be more tolerant of future, hotter and drier conditions
- addressing pressures that exacerbate climate impacts
- undertaking research and piloting the use of agricultural activities that take up less space and/or use less water
- community led education activities to enable climate ready conservation actions.

Please contact [REDACTED] Director Wetlands Section if you would like to seek further information about Ramsar wetlands and the work of the Wetlands Section.

Kind regards, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Wetlands Section | Commonwealth Environmental Water Office  
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment  
[www.awe.gov.au](http://www.awe.gov.au)