



# Newsletter

## President - Trevor Clark

Wow what a season we are having!

Firstly, good rains have seen high flows down our creek system for a number of weeks and full allocations for irrigators and environmental irrigators. Many low-lying wetlands and riparian zones have now had a drink. Now our pop-up environment (irrigation) will spring into life as well. YACTAC has been trying to encourage 'rolling starts' into an adaptive Long Term Watering Plan where, when targets are met irrespective of how flow rates/duration times are achieved, the timeline reverts to the start after any high flow event. In a year such as this, with so many boxes ticked, wetland targets would not be watered again until the next timeline trigger, instead of hard wired, i.e. 3 times in 10 years. This idea will take some time to be taken up, but it will be well worth the effort.

The accelerated SDLAM Modernisation Project is taking much of our time. We had Minister Pavey, Minister Ley, Justin Clancy, Wes Fang, Perin Davey and senior bureaucrats from DPIE and 3Rivers visiting Hartwood Weir and Yanco Weir. Minister Pavey announced a \$104 million budget to be spent on the Modernisation Project which includes replacing Hartwood, Wanganella, Piccaninny and Caroonboon weirs (including fish passage) for mid-stream storage, also some infrastructure around Wanganella Swamp, Mundoora and Wilson anabranches, along with other measures. While YACTAC fully support these projects in principle, site visits have raised key objectives from our point of view:

- minimise impact on riparian zones during construction
- recognise and protect cultural heritage sites
- minimise build time by using modern building systems
- establish operating rules for upstream and downstream landholders to ensure no negative impacts.

YACTAC will continue to work with bureaucrats and landholders to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved.

Better Bidgee and Reconnecting River Country (constraints) projects are going to start soon and will have an effect on the YCS. The Better Bidgee Program proposal includes a new weir at the Yanco offtake but no regulator in the Yanco cutting. Relax constraints will mean larger flows down the Murrumbidgee River which will also impact the YCS. As usual the devil will be in the detail, which is yet to be discussed.

Andrea has been working away enhancing the environmental values of the YCS. Since the release of the platypus report Andrea is now overseeing 3 projects as well as assisting with some monitoring for CSU. The YCS never fails to surprise with the discovery of the rare Rainbow Fish in the Rhyola swamp and the Yanco Creek.

Please contact the team to discuss anything about the Yanco Creek System.

As this is the last newsletter for the year, I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable festive season.

Cheers Trevor



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### EMAIL OPTION

- Take advantage of the links to additional information.
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

## WaterNSW

### Monthly YCS Operating meetings

- Major topics of discussion are the high flows in the Murrumbidgee Rivers and flooding mitigation.
- With consistent rainfall in the catchments, high flows will continue for some time. However the level of flow will fluctuate depending on many factors.
- MIL's Wollamai Escape is being used to top up flows into the Wanganella Swamp, as a trial.

### Fortnightly Air Space meetings

- Discussions continue about the need to mitigate flood risk, dam levels, air space and inflows.
- If you have an opinion on how the dams should be operated, please contact Tanya.

### Supplementary Water

- Discussions are being held on behalf of YCS users to ensure supplementary water licenses are utilized during high flow events.

### Yanco Weir - before and after

- Gate seal replacement and painting has been completed.



### New Internet Portal

- New customer internet portal in development.

### Customer Advisory Group

- WaterNSW will call for nominations during Feb/March 2022.
- New term from 1 July 2022-25.

## Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

COVID has fundamentally changed the way business is undertaken. Online meetings are now frequent and demanding, with every opportunity to host a meeting being gleefully shared amongst government organisations, along with the invitation list including all and sundry. Many participants attend without input or engagement. Yet it doesn't appear that efficiency or progress is of any concern in many of the interactions. Welcome to the new 'business' world!

However activity has never been greater in YACTAC. Andrea is run off her feet with environmental projects and on ground activities. The YCS is now going to be monitored each year using commonwealth funding, which is a great outcome.

Trevor has spent many hours in the field, with the SDLAM team and contractors 3Rivers, sharing his opinion and wealth of knowledge about the YCS and construction methods of civil works. Initially the SDLAM team were talking about building works off stream but they are now designing options that include in-stream works. It is early days in the design phase but you should have confidence that YACTAC is there every step of the way.

I just seem to go from one meeting to the next on a daily basis. My big push at the moment is for WaterNSW to recognise that their charging system could be improved. I am also finalising the updated YACTAC policy document. In addition to the usual SDLAM commitments.

We would like to thank all the people who have submitted their membership payments and encourage others to re-new or join, as everyone benefits from the work that is being undertaken on their behalf. When representing YACTAC we are working for all people who live and are connected to the creek system, as well as towns people and without membership income representation is compromised.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board members for volunteering their time, especially the executive team. Many hours are put in by various executive members and without this selfless act YACTAC would not function.

We sincerely hope you are able to take some much needed time out for the festive season and reflect on the year that has been.

## SDLAM: Acceleration, Better Bidgee, River Reconnection Country

Why have one project when you can have three! This is the situation the people of the YCS face. Water Infrastructure NSW (WINSW) are pitching not one but three projects to be undertaken simultaneously. We have been discussing the Acceleration - Modernisation project since 2018. We feel we are well on the way to a deliverable and equitable outcome for this SDLAM project.

However, the other two projects are another story. There is much activity and internal bureaucratic discussion, with little forward progress that is being shared with the community, relating to the details of the Better Bidgee and Reconnecting River Country projects. Business cases are to be presented in January 2023. So there will be much activity in 2022 on these projects, but no actual outcomes.

The department website states:

**Better Bidgee** project will potentially:

- Increase flows to Yanco Creek
- Greater control of water flows in the system
- Improved fish passage and environmental outcomes
- A better balance of outcomes between YCS and the Murrumbidgee River.

**Reconnecting River Country** project aim is to:

- Improving wetland and floodplain connectivity.

## Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

### Refreshing River Management Project 2021 - 2029

YACTAC has recently signed a 10-year *Refreshing River Management* (RRM) grant project with Murray Local Land Services. The target area surrounds the Yanco, Colombo, and Billabong creeks, including the towns of Morundah, Jerilderie, Conargo and Wanganella (Central Billabong).

The project aims are for:

- Improved creek health
- Enduring social and economic drivers for creek-friendly farming
- Improved integration of creek management activities
- A suite of tools and initiatives that reduce barriers to action for all stakeholders
- A suite of tools and initiatives for collaborative planning and delivery.



I am looking to engage interested individuals in the new Advisory Committee. The stakeholder's role will be to guide the direction of the RRM project.

Thank you to those involved in the community interviews discussing your values of the creek system. Forty-five interviews are being conducted by Griffith University across three RRM pilot areas (Central Billabong, Riverina Highlands and South West Slopes).

It is rare to have long-term funding in natural resource management, hence this pilot project is determined to deliver excellent outcomes to our region over the coming decade.

### Yanco Creek System environmental monitoring 2021 - 2022

From 18 - 22 October wetland monitoring surveys were conducted in the YCS between Morundah and Moulamein by Charles Sturt University and YACTAC. At Wanganella (southern swamp), 'Broome' and 'Bundure' small and large fyke nets were set overnight at both wetland and near-by creek sites. At 'Rhyola', the wetland was dry and fyke nets were set in the creek only. Night-time frog and early morning bird surveys were conducted at all netting sites. Shimmering little Murray Rainbow fish at 'Rhyola' and 'Bundure' were found, and in Wanganella shrimp were plentiful, along with waterbird and fish species. Species recorded included: four local frog species (Peron's tree frog, eastern sign-bearing frog, spotted marsh frog, barking marsh frog); three turtle species (eastern-long-necked turtle, Macquarie turtle and broad shelled turtle); and fish species (Rainbow fish, carp gudgeon, golden perch, Murray cod and pest species - gambusia, carp, weather loach).



Overall biodiversity was higher in wetlands compared to creek sites.

*CSU emptying fyke nets at Bundure on Yanco Creek.*

### NSWIC

- AGM and general meeting hosted various speakers, including Minister Pavey and Jim Bentley. Along with presentations from:
- Snowy Hydro
- NRAR
- MDBA Deliverability Program
- CEWH
- DPIE/WINSW

### CEWH

#### Highlights of 2021

- Highest number of Southern bell frogs seen in the lower Murrumbidgee wetlands in 20 years.
- Murray cod spawning and recruitment.
- Support waterbird breeding.
- Wetlands are well watered this year.

### EES - Environment

- Late spring flows for Trout and Murray Cod spawning
- Environmental flows of 1400ML over Warriston Weir.
- Difficult to maintain water levels at Wanganella swamp.
- Rule Trigger: when Hartwood Weir reaches above 1200ML/day, flows into Forest Creek must be unimpeded. There has been an event earlier in the season and another one will occur this week.
- Unregulated flows from the upper Billabong Creek will increase flows in the mid - lower section of the Yanco Creek System.

### YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council>



**YANCO CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES  
ADVISORY COUNCIL INC.**

**PO Box 53  
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**Upper Section Committee:**

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Please contact us to discuss any matter regarding the creek system, riparian areas or concerns you may have.

If you know of any change of ownership of property please send details to the Executive Officer, so our records can be kept up to date.



## Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

### Rakali monitoring with CSU

Emmalie Sanders (CSU PhD candidate) set up Rakali (water rat) monitoring sites where YCS monitoring occurred. Her camera traps recorded rakali in addition to white-necked heron, Nankeen night heron, pink-eared ducks, stilts, swan chicks, emus, kangaroos, brush tailed possums, cattle and foxes. Platypus was also found on the creek. Last week the land trap caught a rakali which the landholder's children named Bindi!

Whilst checking the traps, one afternoon, a platypus was seen swimming close to the bank—what a bonus!



*Meet 'Bindi' the rakali caught (and released) on 'New Era' this month.*

### Colombo Creek Fish habitat project

The Colombo Creek Fish habitat grant has recently been signed by YACTAC with most work in the planning stages. In 2022 five kms of riparian area will be fenced and direct seeded over several properties. A planting day of wetland species will occur and carp will be removed. There has also been a recent meeting with OzFish, YACTAC and South-West anglers looking to work on future projects and collaborations, especially concerning improvement of creek health and fish numbers.

### Wind down the Willows project

The Wind down the Willows project is ongoing with contractors waiting for lower flows for willow removal. New contracts have been drawn up and willow removal workshops will occur in 2022.

**If you would like to be involved or know more about YACTAC projects please contact Andrea Mitchell.**



*Wanganella Swamp monitoring*