



Newsletter

President - Trevor Clark

I attended a 2024-25 irrigation planning meeting with key Murrumbidgee stakeholders, hosted by WaterNSW. Topics discussed were: environmental water delivery, dam storage, projected future inflows and bulk water delivery in the Murrumbidgee River and Yanco Creek System (YCS). This is always an insightful and positive meeting.

I have been informed that the SDLAM Yanco Modernisation Program continues to progress behind the scenes. The EIS will be on public display soon and we expect a meeting with the team next month. As a member of the Stakeholder Advisory Panel I am keen to see proposed designs, timelines for construction and other key information around this project.

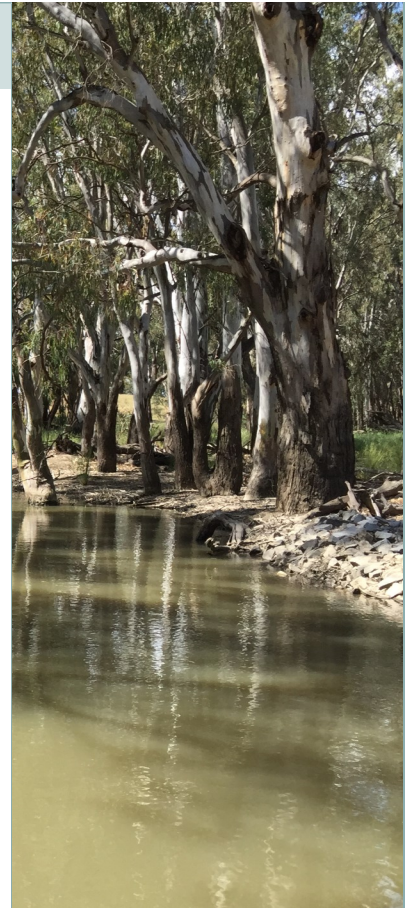
The opening of tenders for buybacks from private diverters has raised some concerns in the Southern Basin. There is a noticeable lack of clarity from government departments regarding the future socio-economic impacts, particularly in our region. The potential removal of up to 1000GL from the consumptive pool in the coming years, mostly from the southern basin, poses significant challenges. It is crucial for the commonwealth government to provide detailed explanations on where the water will be removed, the socio-economic impacts on those regions, and how the structural adjustment package will be implemented. Local communities, which have been developed with the support of irrigation water, now face major restructuring. The future may see less consumptive water available, which will have a direct impact on the small businesses relying upon irrigation customers. If water is sold to the government out of the Yanco Creek System that water will no longer attract the YCS Levy which will have a direct impact on the ability for YACTAC to perform works on the creek system.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) is set to release its determination on WaterNSW charges soon. WaterNSW proposed a significant increase (over 60%) to be factored in over the next five years, so IPART's final decision will be crucial for the irrigation sector.

Looking ahead, numerous meetings and reviews are on the horizon, including discussions on the MDBA review, Snowy Licence review, WaterNSW Licence review and more. It's essential for landholders to recognise that their interests are represented by YACTAC in these discussions.

I have been involved in a number of media releases to draw attention to the changes that are being proposed for our region. Stay informed and engaged as we navigate these significant changes.

Cheers Trevor



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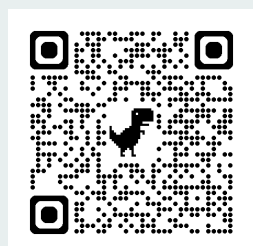
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Yanco Creek System



YACTAC2024



WaterNSW

- Again we are discussing the limitations on amending water orders. As you know the YCS has long lead order times yet no efficient method of amending orders.
- We are pushing strongly to have an online mechanism to amend orders, similar to the method available to CICL and MI.
- Send an email to amend your water order:

customer.helpdesk@water.nsw.com.au

- Working together will deliver the best outcomes.

EWAG

- The spring watering events were discussed at the EWAG meeting held this week.
- The Lower Bidgee will receive a November flow with the Yanco Creek System receiving an eflow in December.
- The November flow will remain in the Murrumbidgee River, below the 1400ML threshold at the Yanco Offtake. If the Murrumbidgee River flows exceed 1400ML WaterNSW doesn't have control of flows into the Yanco Creek.
- The December YCS environmental flow into the Wanganella Wetlands is primarily for riparian vegetation., rather than for birds or fish.

Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

It was a sprint to finalise the 2023-24 financial year in preparation for our AGM on 14 August. All the preparation work undertaken in June paid dividends with a smooth transition from the accountant to the auditor. Compliance is a very important component to running an efficient and effective organisation and the standards kept in YACTAC were commented on favourably by the auditor.

The AGM was very successful with a number of guest speakers who presented on topical matters relating to our valued creek system and the broader decisions being made that will directly impact us in the future.

The board has strengthened links by agreeing to undertake additional monitoring and analysis of the species that live in our waterways and wetlands. CSU is running the FlowMER 2.0 program which monitors the Murrumbidgee Valley waterways and it makes sense to support additional work in the Yanco Creek System. We need to show what species and vegetation we have in our system in order to attract additional funding for future works.

Reconnecting River Country

The Commonwealth government has committed an additional \$247m to fund this program until December 2026. It is only the upper section of the Yanco Creek System that is covered as it deals with additional high flows in the Murrumbidgee River. There will be a new team appointed as it moves from design to implementation. Some landholders in the upper section are members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Murrumbidgee Valley.

Guest Speaker Highlights from our AGM

Rex Conallin, DCCEEW, highlighted the need for ongoing investment in the Yanco-Billabong System to preserve its ecological value.

Brendan Maher and Colin Hood from WaterNSW provided an overview of corporate strategy and water charge calculations, noting that fixed costs present ongoing challenges.

Matt Barden, SDLAM Yanco Project Manager, discussed the extended SDLAM funding agreement, key project milestones, and the importance of engaging local contractors.

Brett Ward, Branch Head of Strategic Policy & Planning at DCCEEW, detailed the framework for delivering 450GL of water, including the Voluntary Water Purchase and Resilient Rivers Program.

Dr. Rose Roche from CSIRO presented the Ag2050 Initiative, which aims to develop resilient Australian farming systems by 2050 through innovative practices and collaborative efforts.

Andrew Cooper, Manager Operations at the Reconnecting River Country Program, outlined goals for improving river systems and overcoming constraints affecting water flow.

YCS Levy 2025 - 2030 proposal

At the AGM members voted to increase the YCS Levy by 4% per annum to keep pace with inflation, it has been at \$.90/ML WE since 2005.

Project Officer - Andrea Mitchell

Over the past few months, I have been actively involved in water monitoring for the Refreshing River Management project at seven sites across the Central Billabong, (Morundah to Wanganella) and have compiled reports for Refreshing Rivers and YACTAC.

I also met with the newly formed Jeithi Jerilderie Aboriginal Corporation and engaged with the community across the Central Billabong, including an event at Billabong Creek, Conargo.

Recent activities have included a planting event on 11 September with local schools at Conargo and the Great Southern Biodiversity Blitz at Morundah on 20 September. During the Blitz, we undertook activities to identify and document the diverse array of plant and animal species, and taught participants how to use the iNaturalist app.

A special thank you to those who have sent information and photos about the local flora and fauna in our region – it all helps to tell the story of the Yanco Creek System.



Photo: Musk lorikeet at Morundah, sent in by Bridget Smith

‘Wetlands for Wildlife’: Early Success in Creating Habitat and Boosting Biodiversity

The ‘Wetlands for Wildlife’ project (2022-2023) funded by YACTAC and Murray Local Land Services, aimed to enhance and increase the biodiversity of habitat in local wetlands for the threatened Southern Bell frog, improve their survival rates and overall trajectory of the species.

Over five months, the project included planting 2,000 seedlings, removing weeds, and installing rock substrate, with an event in May 2023 planting 120 seedlings and transplanting phragmites and nardoo. Revisiting in July 2024, it was pleasing to see progress, with natural revegetation thriving, especially in fenced areas, which outpaced unfenced zones. Landholders David and Gillian Leeds were also satisfied, noting the long-term nature of the transformation. While some understory plants faced challenges from rabbits or kangaroos, growth overall has been good. A replant of phragmites could be beneficial, as the initial planting faced challenges due to timing and rising water levels.

Wetlands for Wildlife



Before

After



Before

After



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

PO Box 53

HOWLONG NSW 2643

Upper Section Committee:

Tom Holt	0417	422	630
Lawrence Simpson	0448	189	001
Glen Baxter	0428	852	623

Mid Section Committee:

Sam Armytage	0427	534	622
Katie Gordon	0408	612	467
Bernie Pinnuck	0439	028	719

Lower Section Committee:

Bob Crawford	0427	875	955
Trevor Clark	0429	691	010
Colin McCrabb	0428	847	558

Executive Officer

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e: eo@yactac.org.au

Project Officer

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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

Community and Industry visit to Refreshing Rivers Project

On the banks of Billabong Creek, at Conargo, multiple local and regional organisations came together to learn about the Refreshing Rivers Program. Seventeen attendees representing Coleambally Irrigation, Murray Irrigation, Yarkuwa, and YACTAC converged, headed by Pat Westwood (General Manager of Murray LLS) and the local LLS team.

This was followed by another event the following week which included members from the NSW Environmental Trust and three members of the Technical Advisory Group. Upper Billabong and Riverina Highlands were also represented at this event and informed attendees of their local achievements and aspirations.



Group meeting on the Billabong Creek at Conargo.

At both events Pat Westwood introduced the Refreshing Rivers Program, highlighting its aspirations and potential for partnerships. Trevor Clark, reinforced the importance of clear water, emphasising

the detrimental impacts of invasive carp on the creek. Tanya Thompson emphasised the importance of building this program over time and increasing the outcomes exponentially year on year. Andrea Mitchell shared insights into this Refreshing Rivers demonstration site, illustrating how community-driven initiatives could drive meaningful change. Andrea also highlighted the project's success in leveraging support, fostering networking opportunities, and delivering value to the community - all underpinned by scientific rigour and community input. Andrea pointed to an example of the positive changes already unfolding: the tall spike rush, planted in November 2023, had not only grown but flourished, improving the habitat and waterway.

This rapid improvement served as a tangible testament to what could be achieved in the next seven years of the Refreshing Rivers Program's decade-long journey. The gathering was more than a meeting; it was an opportunity to share the story of the Refreshing Rivers Program and inspire others to join the effort.

The attendees not only learned of the aspirations of the Refreshing Rivers Program across the three target areas (Central Billabong, Upper Billabong and Riverina Highlands) but also saw firsthand the benefits of collaborative action. It was clear that by working together organisations and community can make a difference - creating healthier, more vibrant waterways for generations to come.



Andrea Mitchell at the Conargo site.