



# Newsletter

## President - Bob Crawford

The recent rains have been most beneficial in de-stressing our catchment. The transition into what appears to be an early autumn break is very noticeable – on and near the creek and on the plains.

The rhetoric surrounding the Yanco SDLAM projects has ramped up considerably recently as the pressure from outside parties has increased. Deputations from allied and adjoining irrigation districts to senior (Water) officers and the NSW government have railed that the YCS should be further cutback to ensure that they can survive without the prospect of buybacks. How churlish is this!

It has come to pass that our system did a good job of providing Water for Rivers, becoming more efficient and offering buyback opportunities for the government. We cannot fudge these results like some of our neighbouring states are doing when they report on their own SDLAM proposals. Neither can we exclude our First Nations people from the knowledge of these actions already undertaken in the YCS!

Had I been given the chance to speak at a recent MDBA SDLAM Technical Committee meeting I would have begun with pride stating your holistic understanding of the connections between social, environment, cultural and economic water flows is sound. That you are prepared to monitor, evaluate and report on the effect of judiciously timed increased flows and even unplanned for supplementary events.

The Yanco SDLAM proposals pale into insignificance when one considers the other three big projects: Yanga NP, Constraints and the Menindee Lakes. They are all in danger of failing to deliver for lack of First Nations involvement and ownership. The chances of these three SDLAM projects proceeding in their present iteration are nil.

I am most reluctant to proceed further with the Yanco SDLAM projects. If I trusted the system, I would recommend that we stop, consolidate the knowledge we know and rest on our recommendation that the system receive a base flow of approximately 400ML/day from the Yanco Offtake.

Sadly, there is no trust and therefore the YACTAC Board and members will have to remain vigilant, while we enjoy the benefits of the recent rains.

## Yanco Weir Maintenance

WaterNSW will NOT be commencing maintenance on the weir gates this irrigation season. WaterNSW has committed to timely consultation during the next water season.

Current dialogue includes the building of a baulk head and work on one gate at a time which would then have little to no impact on flows into the Yanco Creek System.



*Baulk Head at Stevens Weir*



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### EMAIL OPTION

- Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via email to take advantage of the links to additional information?
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

## Murrumbidgee Environmental Water Advisory Group - EWAG

- Wanganella Swamp watering event commenced late 2019. There is a meeting this week, so details will be in the next issue.
- Information about EWAG can be found on:  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/water-for-the-environment/murrumbidgee/environmental-water-advisory-group>

## WaterNSW Operations

- CAG (Customer Advisory Group) meeting to be held later this month. Minutes of meetings can be found on:  
<https://www.watarnsw.com.au/customer-service/service-and-help/groups/murrumbidgee-cag>

- ROSCCo (River Operations Stakeholder Consultation Committee) meeting to be held later this month. Minutes of meetings can be found on:  
<https://www.watarnsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/roscco>

## 'Up Effluent Creek'

Report by Maryanne Slattery and others

- Highlighted discrepancies and issues with SDLAM.
- Listed YACTAC's stance.
- Gained media attention and departmental activity.
- Minister Pavey acknowledged the report and lack of community support for Yanco SDLAM projects.
- Find the report on:

<https://www.tai.org.au/content/effluent-creek-basin-plan-projects-damage-sensitive-waterways>

## Environmental Manager - Dr Dale McNeil



*Southern Bell Frog*

following the January rise in water levels. There were plenty of other frog species out and about as well, including the Peron's tree frog, spotted grass frog, barking marsh frog, two species of banjo frog and the southern sign bearing froglet.

This result emphasizes the environmental benefit that can be achieved simply by moving water around thoughtfully. A big congratulations to WaterNSW for listening to ecological advice that I presented. Vince Kelly, WaterNSW put in a lot of effort to ensure this flow fitted WaterNSW's operational needs and worked closely with MDBA and DPIE before the flow could come through the Yanco. It is inspiring to have such positive outcomes working with WaterNSW. A huge 'Thank You' to Vince Kelly.

## Platypus Funding Awarded

YACTAC has been successful in attracting a \$15,000 investment from the Wettenhall Environment Trust to carry out our platypus project planned for this autumn. Congratulations to everyone because it is your levy that has made this possible.

I encourage everyone to start thinking about platypus, remember who and where you heard someone saying they had seen one, or if you're lucky enough, where have you seen one yourself. If we can start out looking at sites where we know they are hiding out, then we can get some really good information right up front.

We will be undertaking a couple of field nights in autumn where we will conduct some community search events. This will involve a dusk and dawn survey along the creek, and we will have guest speakers coming in to tell us all about platypus and their conservation. We may even catch one! For the adventurous, I will set up an overnight camp so that we can do an evening search, listen to some amazing talks around a campfire and then bunk down by the creek so we can be up early for a search. These will be designed as family events; we want kids to be able to connect with our amazing wildlife.

We will be undertaking a ground-breaking science project detecting platypus DNA from water samples. This will tell us if there are platypus nearby even if we can't find them. I really hope I see you there.

## Y-Spy

Myriophyllum, or milfoil is a feathery water plant that grows under water with small 'tree like' sections sticking up from the water. In flower they can sometimes make a dam or pool look orangey pink.

It is an extremely important as a habitat for small fish and invertebrates. In particular, the small fish that becoming extinct. More myriophyllum is something I'd love to see all around our creeks and dams.





## DPIE - EES Wanganella Watering

Environment, Energy and Science formally OEH

After a very difficult process, WaterNSW and DPIE have delivered environmental water to fill part of the Wanganella Swamp. We are extremely lucky to get this water as there is very little environmental water available. We congratulate James Maguire and his team for their efforts.

I undertook some vegetation surveys in the swamp in conjunction with CSU and found an amazing variety of wetland plants. There was lots of nardoo – the plant that helped kill Bourke and Wills, and myriophyllum (milfoil), a waterplant that should be far more widespread than it is in the YCS. I always find lots of native fish such as pygmy perch around this plant, my hope is that if we can expand the beds of waterplants we will create a great home for those threatened little fish.

There was also an abundance of tadpoles caught in my fish nets, but no fish. There were several long neck turtles as well, showing that once we add water to these wetlands the critters move in. There were abundant invertebrates, dragonfly nymphs, beetle larvae and other aquatic insects – and these little guys are GREAT food for fish.  
Dr Dale McNeil



*Wanganella Swamp October 2019*

*after watering February 2020*

## Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

A tour was being organised for this month but had to be cancelled due to wet conditions, isn't that a great reason to change dates. I hope the rain was what you needed and wanted. It certainly lifted the spirits of many people.

There is never a dull moment advocating on behalf of YACTAC in order to ensure the Yanco Creek System has a bright future. With some exciting events happening and increase in media coverage we have been raising awareness of our unique healthy ecosystem. The release of the 'Up Effluent Creek' report by Maryanne Slattery caused a flurry of interest, which we welcome. The more people talking about the system the better.

There was a presentation by Transgrid at the last board meeting and we were informed of the proposal to build transmission lines across the Yanco and Colombo Creek, in an east/west direction. There is also the largest solar farm in NSW being proposed by Reach Solar Energy at Yarrabee, north of Morundah.

We intend to engage with Transgrid and Reach Solar Energy to ensure they are aware of our precious ecosystem and develop a partnership to increase environmental work on the system.

The relationships with key organisations such as Landcare, Local Land Services, universities, councils and others is developing and will provide future opportunities for increased activity on the Yanco Creek System.

NSWIC is changing their membership conditions and it remains to be seen whether YACTAC will be able to gain 'observer' status. NSWIC membership allows YACTAC to keep informed of the many changes within government and the rules around bulk water access.

### NSWIC

- Reviewing many policies
- New membership options
- Bulk Water Pricing update WAMC to commence mid 2020  
WaterNSW requested 2 year delay - discussion process to commence July 2020.

### Water Resource Plans

- SAP meeting next week to discuss changes before implementation.

### Inquiry into the management of Murray –Darling Basin water resources

- Mick Keelty conducting review
- Submission made and private interview
- Addressed public meeting

### Regional Water Strategies

- Aim to improve resilience
- Infrastructure strategy 2018-2038
- Consultation draft late 2020
- Implementation 2021

### Metering Compliance

- No consideration given to industry because of government delays.
- Still many unanswered questions about WaterNSW owned meters reverting to private ownership.

### YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

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

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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.



## Creek Weed Control

Matt Wooden and his team have almost completed autumn weed control on the system. Matt was pleasantly surprised with the condition of the system. There are some willows in the Colombo Creek section that are now targeted for control. The lower section will also be receiving some attention in the near future.

If you have any weeds along the creek system you would like advice on or action taken please call Tanya or Matt.

**Matt Wooden: 0429 664 509**



## SDLAM—Stakeholders Advisory Group

There has been three Technical Advisory Group meetings and it is disappointing to see a change over of approx 30% of department staff. This means that some new departmental people will not have an in-depth understanding of any of the projects or background knowledge of the Yanco Creek System. YACTAC see this as a risk and another time waster. There has also been two Community Advisory Group meetings, with the next one scheduled for tomorrow. The Aboriginal Advisory Group has not been formed and it is unknown what format that group will take. There has also been changes within the DPIE - Water SDLAM management team. Late last year Tracey MacDonald's role was divided into two roles and Paul Weedon (Wagga) took over SDLAM Yanco/Menindee projects. Paul Weedon is yet to visit the area.

YACTAC feels this situation creates more blockages and has the potential to slowdown the consultation phase. In April 2019 we asked the question whether we were here to talk about talk or to start planning, well here we are nearly a year later and feel like we are still talking about process.

There is still no community confidence or support for the projects. Until we see details with independent modelling there is nothing to develop trust. Without trust there is no support.

YACTAC will continue to attend every meeting and opportunity to state our opinions and share our knowledge, on the understanding that our voices will be heard. Bob, Mark, Dale and Tanya will work diligently to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved. Currently the Technical Advisory Group and Community Advisory Group are meeting monthly separately. A combined meeting is to be held some time in the future.

## Inflow Statistics

- 9000 GL/year average since 1892
- 7700 GL/year (30 year average)
- 5700 GL/year (10 year average)
- 2,800 GL/year 2019-2020

*Billabong Creek  
This is what we are advocating for.*

