

Floodplain Strikeforce Interagency Action Plan

In response to concerns raised by stakeholders, process changes, additional guidance and support are proposed to assist landholders in navigating the flood work approval process.

Background

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) recently consulted with stakeholders throughout the NSW Murray and Billabong Creek valleys as part of developing draft floodplain management plans. This consultation occurred from 29 September until 16 November 2025. At the same time, WaterNSW was actively implementing the Floodplain Management Plan for the Murrumbidgee Valley Floodplain, which commenced on 1 July 2025.

Concerns have been raised by stakeholders regarding the conflicting messaging, support and communication material provided by WaterNSW and DCCEEW, specifically:

1. Inconsistency in advice being provided by DCCEEW and WaterNSW
2. Uncertainty regarding flood works approvals requirements
3. Confusion about requirements for approvals where works are primarily for water supply, but all meeting the definition of a flood work
4. Costs of engaging consultants and flood modellers, especially in relation to flood studies
5. Adequacy of existing communication materials
6. Opportunities to access NSW mapping to reduce costs
7. Concerns about the WaterNSW pre assessment interview process and engagement at other stages of the assessment process

DCCEEW and WaterNSW held a series of bilateral workshops to table, discuss and better understand concerns raised by stakeholders. Both agencies have identified areas where process improvements could be made, and internal or external guidance improvement is needed.

To respond to these concerns and improve understanding, DCCEEW and WaterNSW have established the Floodplain Strikeforce and developed a draft Interagency Action Plan with proposed actions to further develop processes, guidance, systems and tools to assist landholders in the flood work approval application and assessment process.

The Floodplain Strike Force Action Plan has eight elements (and 37 actions) to address these concerns. These elements are:

1. Interagency Strikeforce Action Plan and Tracking
2. Landholder engagement, support and advice
3. Making communications clearer – definitions and terminology
4. Identifying flood works and what requires a flood work approval
5. Support for landholders to undertake a flood study
6. Providing landholders with information to support the flood work application process
7. Understanding the rules for areas with no floodplain management plan
8. Interagency consistency on the flood work assessment process

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Action Plan Element	Addressing Stakeholder Concerns	Proposed guidance or actions to resolve	Responsible agency	Completion date	Status Feb 26	Comment
Interagency Strikeforce Action Plan and Tracking	All concerns	1. Consultation: a) Consult with peak stakeholders on the content of the Strikeforce draft Interagency Action Plan b) Conduct workshops with peak stakeholders to collaborate and refine action plan items and deliverables c) If timing aligns, utilise WaterNSW Customer Advisory Groups as a forum to talk to the proposed Action Plan and advise that workshop(s) will be arranged as required	Both	25 May 2026	25%	Awaiting approval of this Action Plan to consult
		2. Develop Floodplain Strikeforce Action Plan Dashboard to track progress	Both	25 May 2026	5%	
Landholder engagement, support and advice	All concerns	3. Undertake quarterly webinar with stakeholders to update and discuss floodplain management plan progress, issues and concerns	Both	Ongoing	100%	To be delivered largely through CAGs which have already had FMPs added to the agenda.
		4. Undertake at least 1 face-to-face outreach day for each new FMP within 6 months of commencement	Both	Ongoing	5%	
		5. Publish joint position on the role of regulatory agencies regarding provision of advice	Both	11 May 2026	50%	Position established. Publication now required.
		6. DCCEEW to communicate during public exhibition, verbally and via public exhibition supporting documents that draft FMPs are subject to change until commencement and that WaterNSW is unable to provide advice on plans until commenced.	DCCEEW	Complete	100%	Complete for the Lachlan and will be included in all future FMP public exhibition processes.
		7. Improve engagement with applicants during flood work application assessment processes, including better transparency of considerations and information used to make decisions	WaterNSW	29 June 2026	5%	
		8. When WaterNSW considers that an application refusal is likely, a meeting is held with the applicable parties to discuss the issues and a way forward	WaterNSW	29 June 2026	25%	Process exists. Just needs to be formalised.



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		9. WaterNSW to focus more effort on ensuring staff that process flood work applications have the necessary training, mentoring and expertise to do so and less experienced staff are supported by more experienced staff	WaterNSW	10 August 2026	5%	
Making communications clearer – definitions and terminology	1: Inconsistency in advice being provided by DCCEEW and WaterNSW 4: Adequacy of existing communication material	10. Address problematic definitions in floodplain management plans (high value infrastructure, proposed flood works, significant impact): a. Identify problematic definitions b. Publish additional information explaining problematic terminology c. Update existing definitions in floodplain management plans, if required	DCCEEW	13 Jul 2026	15%	
Identifying flood works and what requires a flood work approval	1: Inconsistency in advice being provided by DCCEEW and WaterNSW 2: Uncertainty for the requirements of flood work approval	11. Publish joint position re the requirement for one approval when an existing work functions as both a water supply work and a flood work (dual works)	Both	20 April 2026	30%	
		12. Investigate WaterNSW systems and processes to have the future capability to implement dual works and develop a proposal to have this feature on the WMS digital roadmap	WaterNSW	29 June 2026	30%	
		13. Publish guidance about when it is allowable for one approval when an existing work functions as both a water supply work (dominant purpose) and a flood work	Both	8 June 2026	35%	
		14. Publish decision tree* and/or update water assist tool to allow landholders to apply flood work definition to any structure	Both	15 June 2026	5%	
		15. Publish guidance on the different types of flood works including visual representation	Both	8 June 2026	15%	
		16. Publish position on flood works that have joint ownership. This rare situation is potentially problematic for landholders	Both	18 May 2026	40%	
		17. Publish position on joint flood works including joint scheme and determine fee for joint scheme applications	WaterNSW	1 June 2026	20%	



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		18. Investigate the amendment of water sharing plans to include requirement to consider floodplain management plan rules when assessing a Water Supply Work Approval & make it easier to streamline approvals when both are required and the dominant purpose is water supply	DCCEEW	25 May 2026	40%	
		19. Streamline processes where an existing work functions as both a water supply work (dominant purpose) and a flood work, but already has a water supply work approval	WaterNSW	TBC	N/A	Contingent on the outcome of Action 13.
		20. Publish guidance on the interaction and delineation between floodplain harvesting and flood work approval processes	Both	18 May 2026	20%	
Support for landholders to undertake a flood study	3: Costs for engaging consultants and flood modellers	21. Submit proposal to Executive for decision on making hydraulic models publicly available. If endorsed, make models publicly available	DCCEEW	13 July 2026	10%	
	5: Opportunities to access NSW mapping to reduce costs	22. Publish information about the need for a consultant and/or floodplain engineer to undertake a flood study (e.g. Tuflow licence required to use flood models)*	DCCEEW	11 May 2026	40%	
		23. Publish a list where consultants and floodplain engineers who are able to undertake a flood study can self-register	Both	1 June 2026	10%	
		24. Develop a training/education program for floodplain engineers to better understand the regulatory requirements and publish a list of entities that have undertaken this training.	Both	End 2026	0%	
		25. Publish decision tree and/or worked examples about when a flood study applies*	Both	8 June 2026	35%	
Providing landholders with information to support the flood work application process	4: Adequacy of existing communications material	26. Publish step-by-step guide to accessing publicly available spatial platforms (Landsat, NSW spatial portal)*	DCCEEW	8 June 2026	35%	
	6: Concerns about the water NSW	27. Review and update existing guidance for application process including information required for pre-application meetings with WaterNSW	WaterNSW	20 April 2026	40%	



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	preassessment interview process	28. Publish additional information about flood work approval application costs and what they include*	Both	29 June 2026	15%	
		29. Review the flood work approval application fee in light of this Interagency Action Plan				
		30. Review website material and publish information about minimum standards for flood work approval applications	WaterNSW	20 April 2026	40%	
		31. Review and update the flood work approval application form to better represent historical works	WaterNSW	29 June 2026	30%	Completed for Murrumbidgee FMP. Completion date is for all other FMPs.
Understanding the rules for areas with no floodplain management plan	2: Uncertainty for the requirements of flood work approval	32. Investigate the possibility of giving legal status to Guidance for areas with no FMP document	DCCEEW	1 June 2026	25%	
		33. Update and publish the Guidance for areas with no FMP document to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. allow for management zone C criteria to apply to works with no significant impact b. require consideration of expired floodplain management plans, where relevant 	Both	8 June 2026	20%	
Interagency consistency on the flood work assessment process	2: Uncertainty for the requirements of flood work approval	34. Develop assessment guidelines for WaterNSW for the assessment of flood work approvals (Flood work technical assessment manual), including how impact assessments are completed.	Both	7 September 2026	5%	
		35. Publish flood work dashboard	WaterNSW DCCEEW Licensing & Approvals	20 April 2026	40%	
		36. Publish statement that applications determined against rules in place at the time of determination	Both	11 May 2026	40%	
		37. Develop customer service standards for stages of application process (requirement for flood study and assessment of flood study)	Both	TBC	0%	Requires more applications to be used as a baseline.

* Is covered in the draft Guideline for FMP Implementation