

Interagency Strikeforce Action Plan Consultation

What We Heard Report – July 2026

Introduction

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

Several concerns were raised by stakeholders including a lack of understanding or confusion about how floodplain management plans operate, the requirement for a flood work and the flood work approval application process. In response to these concerns DCCEEW and WaterNSW established the Interagency Floodplain Strikeforce (Strikeforce) tasked with allaying these stakeholder concerns and improving FMP implementation.

The Strikeforce developed an Interagency Action Plan which identifies areas where internal or external guidance is needed, proposes solutions, identifies the responsible agency/branch and provides associated timeframes. The Interagency Action Plan contained 36 co-delivered actions that will improve stakeholder education in relation to floodplain management and assist landholders with the flood work approval process through the development of additional supporting systems and tools.

WaterNSW and DCCEEW consulted with key stakeholders on the actions in the Interagency Action Plan in April and May 2026. Verbal feedback from stakeholders was discussed across 5 online workshops, as well as 7 written submissions received.

Feedback summary

Several key priority themes emerged from the Interagency Strikeforce Action Plan consultation online workshops and subsequent submissions. These are:

1. Approval of historical works
2. Dual works
3. Joint applications

Key feedback across the online workshops and submissions that supports these priority themes is summarised below.

Feedback	Response
All pre-existing flood works—particularly those constructed prior to 1999 and before relevant FMPs—should be formally recognised as lawful legacy infrastructure and approved as-is, without requiring further modelling, reassessment, or additional compliance. Clear grandfathering provisions and streamlined compliance pathways to prevent retrospective regulatory burdens on long-standing, lawfully established works should be introduced.	The treatment of historical works will be added to the Action Plan. A joint DCCEEW/WaterNSW working group will be established to re-examine the appropriateness of existing settings and to consider whether regulatory or other refinements are warranted in order to balance stakeholder concerns with statutory responsibilities under the Water Management Act 2000.
A risk-based approach to approvals ie exempt low-risk works, provide simplified pathways for moderate-risk activities, and require full assessment only where there is a demonstrable significant impact should be adopted.	Both Agencies will investigate a risk-based assessment approach, including items 25 and 37 in the Action Plan with a view to streamlining the approach where possible.
Fee relief, offsets, or concessions for landholders who have already incurred substantial compliance costs under previous frameworks, to address equity concerns and mitigate policy risk should be provided.	Acknowledge the concern that landholders incurred valid costs to become compliant with the legislation in place at the time, and we'll consider this feedback when re-examining historical works.
Consistency and practicality by avoiding requirements to remove longstanding infrastructure.	Historical works to be added to the Action Plan. A joint DCCEEW/WaterNSW working group will be established to understand requirements and /or if regulatory change is required.
Exempting works already approved as needing the requirement for dual approvals.	Both Agencies agree that if a work is already authorised under either a water supply work approval, or a flood work approval – further approval for the work is not required. (Except in cases where the Water Sharing Plan specifies). A working group has been established to investigate the possibility of a single approval for existing or new unapproved works that meet the requirement for both a water supply

	work approval and a flood work approval and to identify and address any regulatory barriers to achieving that outcome.
Any application exemptions should be applied consistently across the state to ensure fairness and regulatory clarity.	Both Agencies agree that reforms in this area should be implemented consistently across NSW. Appropriate exemptions will also be considered as part of the risk-based approach to streamlining the assessment approach.
Any ambiguous or problematic terms within legislative instruments need to be clearly defined to minimise interpretation issues and disputes.	Addressed in the Action Plan under the key theme "Making communications clearer – definitions and terminology"
Compliance pathways developed that do not rely on costly legal or hydrological inputs (e.g. flood studies) need to be established, unless they are genuinely necessary.	Actions 25 and 37 of the plan addresses this feedback and this will also be considered as part of the risk-based assessment approach and associated opportunities for streamlining.
Substantive reform needs to be considered – not just procedural refinement – to enable genuine exemptions and fast-tracked approval processes where appropriate.	Demonstrating a commitment to reform, with the existing action for dual works, and the new action to review Historical Works and explore a more streamlined assessment approach.

Next steps

Feedback from consultation with key stakeholders has been incorporated into the Action Plan. Actions have been segmented into two phases – the first addressing core elements that form the basis for a Flood Work application, and the second focusing on administrative and procedural improvements. This directly addresses feedback received during consultation that substantive reform should be considered alongside procedural improvements.

Historical works have been added to the Action Plan to ensure FMP provisions adequately consider licensing of historical works including:

1. Investigating the historical works provisions to assess if they adequately balance stakeholder concerns against statutory duties under the Water Management Act 2000.

It is recommended that concerns raised about FMP mapping for the development or replacement of floodplain management plans should be addressed during consultation.