

EPBC 2019/8590 – Operation of Peel River Drought Protection Works, Tamworth, NSW

Chaffey to Dungowan Pipeline: Annual Compliance Report 2026

Chaffey to Dungowan Pipeline EPBC 2019/8590 – Annual Compliance Report 2026

Author	Jeremy Stacy, Environmental Planning Adviser
Review	Mayank Thakre, Built Infrastructure
Revision history	Final Version 1 - 31 July 2026

Declaration of accuracy

In making this declaration, I am aware that sections 490 and 491 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) make it an offence in certain circumstances to knowingly provide false or misleading information or documents. The offence is punishable on conviction by imprisonment or a fine, or both. I declare that all the information and documentation supporting this compliance report is true and correct in every particular. I am authorised to bind the approval holder to this declaration and that I have no knowledge of that authorisation being revoked at the time of making this declaration.

Signed	
Full Name	Sarah Carr
Position	Head of Catchment & Land Management Land & Water Operations
Organisation (including ABN)	WaterNSW ABN 21 147 934 787
Date:	31 July 2026

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Description of Activities	1
3. Compliance Review – Conditions as per EPBC 2019/8590	2
4. Implementation of Offset Plan	7
4.1 Offset Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators	7

List of Tables

Table 1: Compliance tracking 17 June 2025 to 16 June 2026	3
Table 2: Summary of Activities	7
Table 3: Key Performance Indicators	8

Appendices

Appendix 1 – EPBC 2019/8590 Variation Approval

Appendix 2 – Photos

1. Introduction

Chaffey Dam is located on the Peel River approximately 43 kilometres (km) south-east of Tamworth, between the towns of Nundle and Woolomin, NSW.

WaterNSW obtained approval to operate a temporary drought mitigation pipeline to supply water directly from Chaffey Dam to the Tamworth water supply network via the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline in June 2020. The pipeline extends underground approximately 18km from Chaffey Dam to Dungowan and connects with the existing Dungowan Dam to Calala water treatment plant pipeline operated by Tamworth Regional Council (TRC).

The pipeline was constructed to operate during severe drought to increase town water security for Tamworth when the Chaffey Dam storage fell below 20% capacity. During operation, water deliveries to TRC were made via the pipeline resulting in no water deliveries to TRC being made via releases to the Peel River.

On 3 June 2020, WaterNSW received authorisation by the NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing under the NSW *Water Supply (Critical Needs) Act 2019* (WSCN Act), to operate the pipeline in accordance with the conditions of approval. Approval under NSW WSCN Act expired on 30 September 2021.

On 12 June 2020, WaterNSW received approval EPBC 2019/8590 with conditions, from the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment for the controlled activity to operate the pipeline during drought. The approval conditions include annual monitoring and compliance reporting; and the development and implementation of a Biodiversity Offset Plan (BOP, GHD 2022). On 3 November 2025, WaterNSW received a notice of extension to the approval, extending the duration of the approval from 1 May 2030 to 1 May 2032.

The extension is to provide sufficient time to fully implement the Biodiversity Offset Management Plan, which has revised timelines for completion of offset measures that were delayed due to flooding and difficulties in implementing the offset measures.

WaterNSW (ABN: 21 147 934 787) is the approval holder for the Chaffey Dam to Dungowan Pipeline Drought Operation project (EPBC 2019/8590) approximately 43 km south-east of Tamworth. The construction was completed in March 2020. Operation of the pipeline to deliver water to Tamworth Regional Council's Calala water treatment plant commenced 17 June 2020 and continued to 29 July 2020. The delivery of water via the pipeline has not occurred since 29 July 2020. The drought ceased September 2020 and the pipeline is not in operation.

This report has been prepared to fulfil the annual compliance reporting requirements of EPBC 2019/8590.

2. Description of Activities

This report relates to the activities undertaken during the reporting period from 17 June 2025 to 16 June 2026. Activities completed in response to EPBC2019/8590 approval include:

- Installation of self-cleaning pump screens December 2025.
- Undertake Year 1 Monitoring between August 2025 and April 2026.
- Preparation of this annual compliance report.

3. Compliance Review – Conditions as per EPBC 2019/8590

The approval notice – to operate a temporary drought mitigation pipeline to supply water directly from Chaffey Dam to the Tamworth water supply network (EPBC 2019/8590) issued on 12 June 2020, requires annual reporting from the commencement of the action on 17 June 2020, against the conditions of consent. Table 2 below outlines these conditions and provides a statement of compliance for the reporting year to 16 June 2026. This report fulfils the requirements of EPBC 2019/8590 Condition 12.

Table 1: Compliance tracking 17 June 2025 to 16 June 2026

Controlled Activity Approval EPBC 2019/8590 Compliance Tracking									
Condition	Source Section No.	Source Page No.	Condition	Action to achieve Compliance	Responsibility	Condition / Commitment Implemented?	Link to Evidence/Record	Status Review	
								June 2026	Evidence / Comments
n/a	EPBC 2019/8590 Notice of Approval letter.	1	EPBC notices to be available on WaterNSW website.	Make EPBC approval available on WaterNSW website.	WaterNSW	15 June 2020	EPBC 2019/8590 Approval 2020	Compliant;	ARK reference D2020/58692 Variation approval received November 2025 ARK# D2025/122551 - The effect of EPBC 2019/8590 approval has been extended from 1 May 2030 to 1 May 2032
1	Annexure A Part A	2	The approval holder must implement the Drought Operations – Delivery of Peel Environmental Water Plan for the life of the approval. In addition the approval holder must comply with NSW conditions of authorisation where those conditions relate to environmental water releases and operation of the technical advisory group.	Submission of Delivery plan – submitted with referral Pipeline operated in accordance with State and Commonwealth approval conditions. PEWTAG provided monitoring data as available.	WaterNSW – Operations	12 June 2020 until cessation of drought	EPBC 2019/8590 Variation Approval 2025 Peel Valley – WaterNSW website	Compliant; complete	Implemented; incorporated into WSCN authorisation conditions ARK D2020/58721 EPBC Approval D2020/58692 Monitoring data collected as requirement of NSW authorisation F2019/5571 Drought ceased September 2020 WSCN Authorisation expired 30 September 2021 Operation of pipeline ceased August 2020
2	Annexure A Part A	2	The approval holder must notify the technical advisory group at least five business days prior to commencing the next phase of operation.	Notice to be sent within time frame required and posted on project website.	WaterNSW-Operations	17 June 2020	Peel Valley – WaterNSW website	Compliant; complete	Drought ceased September 2020 WSCN Authorisation expired 30 September 2021 Operation of pipeline ceased August 2020 Notices posted to website 2020
3	Annexure A Part A	2	The approval holder must invite the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to nominate a representative to become a member of the technical advisory group.	Email invitation.	WaterNSW-Operations	12 June2020	ARK# D2021/120098	Compliant; complete	Drought ceased September 2020 WSCN Authorisation expired 30 September 2021 Operation of pipeline ceased August 2020 D2021/120098 CEWH members identified in PEWTAG terms of reference, page 6
4	Annexure A Part A	2	To compensate for impacts to Murray Cod and Silver Perch, the approval holder must, within 20 business days of commencement of the action, submit a Biodiversity Offset Management Plan (BOMP) for approval by the Minister. If the Minister approves the BOMP, then the BOMP must be implemented.	Draft Biodiversity Offset Management Plan.	WaterNSW – EnvHer	submitted 15 July2020	ARK# D2021/119441	Compliant; complete	Draft submitted to department 15/07/2020 D2021/119441
5	Annexure A Part A	2	The approval holder must make all reasonable efforts to ensure the BOMP (in full) meets the following requirements and promptly address any feedback from the Department on unapproved versions of the BOMP so that the BOMP is suitable for the Minister to approve within three months of the commencement of the action.	Biodiversity Offset Management Plan.	WaterNSW – EnvHer JS	Plan approved 29 October 2020 and as amended 2022 & 2023, 2024 & 2025	BOMP ARK# D2020/101647 (superseded) BOMP ARK# D2022/109857 (Rev 6)	Compliant	BOMP D2020/101647(superseded) Plan approval D2020/116788 Amended approval D2025/122547 Revision 6 was approved by the Department 11 November 2025 The BOMP has been amended to address delays due to floods and persistent elevated river levels and site access constraints
6	Annexure A Part A	2	The BOMP must: a. be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist, and be consistent with the Department's Environmental Management Plan Guidelines and the EPBC Act Environmental Offset Policy; b. propose an offset package, including direct habitat restoration works and conservation measures relevant to Murray Cod and Silver Perch c. include, but not be limited to: i. specific objectives to demonstrate improvements in habitat quality and conservation outcomes for Murray Cod and Silver Perch over the life of the approval;	Biodiversity Offset Management Plan Rev. 6, July 2025.	WaterNSW – EnvHer JS	Biodiversity Offset Management Plan is being implemented	BOP ARK # D2022/109857 (Rev.6)	Compliant	Notification sent to Department June 2025 ARK# D2025/79915 BOMP requirement (c) ii – The BOMP Rev 6 identifies revised delivery timeframes due to ongoing delays as a result of floods and persistent elevated river levels. The project approval has been extended to 1 May 2032 The installation of the self-cleaning pumps screens and habitat snags has been completed. Has now moved to monitoring phase and Year 1 monitoring completed during the reporting period

Controlled Activity Approval EPBC 2019/8590 Compliance Tracking									
Condition	Source Section No.	Source Page No.	Condition	Action to achieve Compliance	Responsibility	Condition / Commitment Implemented?	Link to Evidence/Record	Status Review	
								June 2026	Evidence / Comments
			ii. specific management actions, and timeframes for implementation, to be carried out to meet the specific objectives to improve habitat quality and conservation outcomes for Murray Cod and Silver Perch; iii. key performance indicators to demonstrate the improvements in habitat quality and conservation outcomes for Murray Cod and Silver Perch; iv. the nature, timing and frequency of monitoring to determine the success of management actions against key performance indicators; v. indicative corrective actions that will be implemented in the event monitoring activities indicate key performance indicators are not or are unlikely to be achieved; vi. the roles and responsibilities for implementing the management actions; vii. evidence of consistency with relevant conservation advices, recovery plans and/or threat abatement plans; viii. commitments to maintain or improve the extent and quality of habitat and populations of other EPBC Act listed threatened species and ecological communities in the offset area; and a timeline and legal mechanism for implementing the offset(s).						
7	Annexure A Part B	3	The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of the date of commencement of the action within 10 business days after the date of commencement of the action. The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of the date of commencement of each phase of operation within 10 business days after the date of commencement of each phase of operation.	Send advice via email at each change of operation phase.	WaterNSW - Operations - AS	Notice #1 - 17 June 2020 - Commencement of Action Notice #2 - 1 July 2020 Notice #3 - 29 July 2020	ARK# D2021/120827 D2021/120845 D2021/120866	Compliant; Complete	Drought ceased September 2020 WSCN Authorisation expired 30 September 2021 Operation of pipeline ceased August 2020 Media Release - https://www.watarnsw.com.au/about/newsroom/2020/chaffey-to-tamworth-pipeline-operational
8	Annexure A Part B	3	The approval holder must maintain accurate and complete compliance records.	Maintain approval tracking spreadsheet and identified records within.	WaterNSW - EnvHer	Implemented compliance tracking	ARK# D2022/18480	Compliant	ARK D2022/18480 - tracking of ongoing commitments and relevant records are updated within this document
9	Annexure A Part B	3	If the Department makes a request for compliance records in writing, the approval holder must provide electronic copies of compliance records to the Department within the timeframe specified in the request.	Notice from Department to be received.	WaterNSW - Project Delivery PM; EnvHer	No requests received	N/A	Compliant	No requests received
10	Annexure A Part B	3	The approval holder must: a. submit plans electronically to the Department; b. publish each plan on the website within 20 business days of the date of this approval, or the date that the plan is approved by the Minister or of the date a revised action management plan is submitted to the Minister or the Department, unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister; c. exclude or redact sensitive ecological data from plans published on the website or provided to a member of the public; and d. keep plans published on the website until the end date of this approval.	Submit plans via email to Department Post ApprovalPostApproval@dcceew.gov.auApproved plans to be published to WaterNSW website https://www.watarnsw.com.au/supply/drought-information/regional-nsw/peel-valley .	WaterNSW - EnvHer JS	Approved BOMP Rev.6 published to WNSW project website	Chaffey to Dungowan Pipeline-EPBC 2019/8590 - Biodiversity Offset Management Plan - Rev 6 July 2025	Compliant	BOMP D2022/18480Rev 6 Approval D2025/122551

Controlled Activity Approval EPBC 2019/8590 Compliance Tracking									
Condition	Source Section No.	Source Page No.	Condition	Action to achieve Compliance	Responsibility	Condition / Commitment Implemented?	Link to Evidence/Record	Status Review	
								June 2026	Evidence / Comments
11	Annexure A Part B	3	The approval holder must ensure that any monitoring data (including sensitive ecological data), surveys, maps, and other spatial and metadata required under a plan, is prepared in accordance with the Department's Guidelines for biological survey and mapped data (2018) and submitted electronically to the Department in accordance with the requirements of the plan.	Submit with annual compliance report via email to Department epbcmonitoring@dcceew.gov.au	WaterNSW - Project Delivery PM; EnvHer	Year 1 monitoring completed during the 2025-2026 reporting period	ARK# D2026/34670	Compliant	Spatial data to be supplied as a package at completion of monitoring ARK# D2024/44694 - Baseline monitoring report prepared 2023-2024 ARK# D2026/34670 - Monitoring Year 1 2025-26
12	Annexure A Part B	3	The approval holder must prepare a compliance report for each 12 month period following the date of commencement of the action, or otherwise in accordance with an annual date that has been agreed to in writing by the Minister. The approval holder must: a. publish each compliance report on the website within 60 business days following the relevant 12 month period; b. notify the Department by email that a compliance report has been published on the website and provide the weblink for the compliance report within five business days of the date of publication; c. keep all compliance reports publicly available on the website until this approval expires; d. exclude or redact sensitive ecological data from compliance reports published on the website; and e. where any sensitive ecological data has been excluded from the version published, submit the full compliance report to the Department within five business days of publication.	Compliance report to be prepared and published to WaterNSW website. Biodiversity monitoring report to be prepared as per BOP requirements. Email notification to DCCEEW epbcmonitoring@dcceew.gov.au to advise of compliance report availability and link to publication on WaterNSW website.	WaterNSW - EnvHer WQS	Annual compliance report to be prepared	ARK# D2026/43311 2025-2026 Annual Compliance Report	Compliant	Annual Compliance Report
13	Annexure A Part B	4	The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of any: incident; non-compliance with the conditions; or non-compliance with the commitments made in plans. The notification must be given as soon as practicable, and no later than two business days after becoming aware of the incident or non-compliance. The notification must specify: a. any condition which is or may be in breach; b. a short description of the incident and/or non-compliance; and c. the location (including co-ordinates), date, and time of the incident and/or non-compliance. In the event the exact information cannot be provided, provide the best information available.	Send advice via email to Department: epbcmonitoring@dcceew.gov.au	WaterNSW	Notification made to the Department within the reporting period regarding ability to deliver offsets within the timeframe	Notification by email June 2025 ARK# D2025/80040	Compliant	Notification sent to the Department advising of potential to be non-compliant with offset installation timeframes due additional weather related delays ARK#D2025/79915 - notification letter

Controlled Activity Approval EPBC 2019/8590 Compliance Tracking									
Condition	Source Section No.	Source Page No.	Condition	Action to achieve Compliance	Responsibility	Condition / Commitment Implemented?	Link to Evidence/Record	Status Review	
								June 2026	Evidence / Comments
14	Annexure A Part B	4	The approval holder must provide to the Department the details of any incident or non-compliance with the conditions or commitments made in plans as soon as practicable and no later than 10 business days after becoming aware of the incident or non-compliance, specifying: a. any corrective action or investigation which the approval holder has already taken or intends to take in the immediate future; b. the potential impacts of the incident or non-compliance; and c. the method and timing of any remedial action that will be undertaken by the approval holder.	Send advice via email to Department: epbcmmonitoring@dcceew.gov.au	WaterNSW	Details provided within notification	ARK# D2025/80040	Compliant	ARK#D2025/79915 - notification letter
15	Annexure A Part B	4	The approval holder must ensure that independent audits of compliance with the conditions are conducted as requested in writing by the Minister.	N/A.	WaterNSW	Nil to date	N/A	Not applicable	Nil requests to date
16	Annexure A Part B	4	For each independent audit, the approval holder must: a. provide the name and qualifications of the independent auditor and the draft audit criteria to the Department; b. only commence the independent audit once the audit criteria have been approved in writing by the Department; and c. submit an audit report to the Department within the timeframe specified in the approved audit criteria.		WaterNSW	Nil to date	N/A	Not applicable	No audits undertaken to date
17	Annexure A Part B	4	The approval holder must publish the audit report on the website within 10 business days of receiving the Department's approval of the audit report and keep the audit report published on the website until the end date of this approval.	Nil to date.	WaterNSW	Nil to date	N/A	Not applicable	No reports prepared to date
18	Annexure A Part B	4	The approval holder may, at any time, apply to the Minister for a variation to an action management plan approved by the Minister under condition 4, or as subsequently revised in accordance with these conditions, by submitting an application in accordance with the requirements of section 143A of the EPBC Act. If the Minister approves a revised action management plan (RAMP) then, from the date specified, the approval holder must implement the RAMP in place of the previous action management plan.	Application to Minister to amend Biodiversity Offset Plan.	WaterNSW	Request to amend Biodiversity Offset Plan made in accordance with approval condition requirements August 2025	Variation request ARK# D2025/98671 & D2025/101554	Compliant	WaterNSW submitted a request in July 2025 to vary the BOMP and request an extension. ARK# D2025/101515 Variation approval received November 2025 ARK# D2025/122551 - The effect of EPBC 2019/8590 has been extended from 1 May 2030 to 1 May 2032.
19	Annexure A Part B	4	Within 30 days after the completion of the action, the approval holder must notify the Department in writing and provide completion data.	notification letter/email epbcmmonitoring@dcceew.gov.au	WaterNSW - EnvHer	Nil to date	Department notified of completion of the action 30 July 2020 ARK# D2021/120866	Compliant; complete	Operation of the pipeline is not permitted outside of the drought which ceased September 2020 and the action is no longer occurring.

'Compliance' is achieved when all the requirements of a condition have been met, including the implementation of management plans or other measures required by those conditions.

A designation of 'non-compliance' should be given where the requirements of a condition or elements of a condition, including the implementation of management plans and other measures, have not been met.

A designation of 'not applicable' should be given where the requirements of a condition or elements of a condition fall outside of the scope of the current reporting period. For example, a condition which applies to an activity that has not yet commenced.

4. Implementation of Offset Plan

The revised Biodiversity Offset Plan (GHD 2022) outlines the key management actions required to achieve the objectives of improving habitat for Murray Cod and Silver Perch.

On ground works to install the seven (7) self-cleaning pump screens was completed December 2025.

The installation of the offset measures of 50 snags and seven self-cleaning pumps screens, has been completed and the offset management plan is now in the five year monitoring phase.

The first year of the five year monitoring program was completed between October 2025 and February 2026.

Annual service and inspections of the screens were undertaken during May 2026. Although outside of irrigation season and not in use at the time of inspections, all screens were present as installed and able to be operated.

Table 2: Summary of Activities

Offset Measure	Actions Undertaken	Performance in accordance with BOMP
#1 – Self-cleaning Pump Screens Install self-cleaning pumps screens on extraction points to seven licenced pumps downstream from Chaffey Dam	7 self-cleaning pump screens with retrieval systems installed	Completed December 2025
#2 – Five Year Monitoring Program monitoring required to assess the success of the offset measures	Monitoring the effectiveness of the offsets	Year 1 surveys undertaken October 2025 to February 2026
#3 – Audit Screen functionality and present	Audit undertaken June 2026	All installed screens remain present as installed and functional

4.1 Offset Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

The first year of monitoring the effectiveness of the offsets against the objectives outlined within the biodiversity offset management plan was undertaken between October 2025 February 2026. When compared to baseline monitoring results, the first year monitoring results indicate that the offset program is working as intended and is beginning to create functional habitat for aquatic biota in the Peel River.

Importantly, the snags are already being used by species that are known to associate with woody debris, including Murray cod and river blackfish, indicating that the structures are meeting their intended purpose as refuge and structural habitat.

There was low detection of larval fish during the first year of survey, however this should not be interpreted as evidence that the re-snagging was unsuccessful. The absence of larvae may reflect the timing of sampling, large-scale habitat disturbance from recent flooding and the subsequent short-term reduction in recruitment following major flow events.

Mature native fish were present and actively using the engineered snags, and conditions at several sites were suitable for spawning. Overall, the monitoring results indicate that re-snagging is beneficial for native fish habitat and has the potential to support spawning and recruitment as the structures continue to age and ecological complexity increases provided flow conditions are suitable.

Two of the 50 installed snags (sng001 & sng047) are known to have been dislodged from their original installation location during the floods and high flows experienced within the Peel River following their installation in 2024. The hardwood pins used to secure the snags remain in place and continue to provide aquatic habitat. One snag (sng001) has been found on the high bank within a stand of trees, however the second displaced snag has not been relocated. The remaining 48 snags are still in their secured locations.

Key Performance Indicators to demonstrate the improvements in habitat quality and conservation outcomes for Murray Cod and Silver Perch are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Key Performance Indicators

Offset Measure	Objective	Key performance indicators	Timeframe	Monitoring method	2026 Performance
Re-snagging	Increase submerged woody habitat to benefit threatened fish species.	Density of key fish habitat (snags) increases in reaches where snags are installed.	Measure to be completed by 28 October 2024	50 snags installed July 2024	Achieved - Completed
		Evidence of macro & micro invertebrate, and biofilm colonisation on installed woody habitat.	Within five years of installation	Instream woody habitat colonisation monitoring	Achieved - Year 1 monitoring indicates colonisation of snags
		Abundances of native fish species with	Within five years of installation	Fish community monitoring	Year 1 monitoring suggests

Offset Measure	Objective	Key performance indicators	Timeframe	Monitoring method	2026 Performance
		known affinity to instream woody habitat increase in reaches where snags installed.			utilisation by fish species.
Self-cleaning screen installation	Minimise native fish entrainment in existing pumps.	Locations and dates of screen installation documented.	Measure to be completed by 30 December 2025	Installation records created	Achieved - Completed
		Audits indicate that screens remain present and functional.	n/a	Audit undertaken May 2026	Achieved – all installed screens remain present and functional
		Installed self-cleaning screen reduces removal of small-bodied or juvenile fish from refuge pools.	Within 24 months of installation	Fish community monitoring	Ongoing Monitoring

APPENDICES



Notification of extension to approval period

Operation of Peel River Drought Protection Works, Tamworth, NSW (EPBC ref 2019/8590)

This decision is made under section 145D of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Approved action

approval holder	Water NSW ABN: 21147 934 787
approved action	To operate a temporary drought mitigation pipeline to supply water directly from Chaffey Dam to the Tamworth water supply network [See EPBC Act referral 2019/8590].
extension of period of effect of approval	The period of effect of the approval has been extended under section 145D(4) of the EPBC Act as described below.
new expiry date of approval	This approval has effect until 1 May 2032.

Person authorised to make decision

name and position	Rachel Short Brach Head Environment Assessments (Vic, Tas) and Post Approvals
signature	
date of decision	3 November 2025

Conditions attached to the approval

The conditions applicable to the approval are publicly available on the department's [EPBC Act Public Portal](#) page.

Appendix 2 – Photos



Appendix Photo 1: Larval drift net



Appendix Photo 2: Engineered snag with collected debris following high flows further enhancing habitat



Appendix Photo 3: Using the snag bag to sample macroinvertebrates at snag on the Peel River.



Appendix Photo 4: Eel-tailed catfish swimming over nest in Peel River near an engineered snag.



Appendix Photo 5: Above water view of eel-tailed catfish & it's circular gravel nest on the river bed near an engineered snag.