



## Amendments to Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Sharing Plan commence today

Thursday, 4 October 2012

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, today announced the commencement of amendments to the water sharing plan covering the Murrumbidgee Regulated River.

The amendments recognise historic diversions to the Lowbidgee as a new subcategory of supplementary water licence within the water sharing plan and set a long-term limit on extraction for this area.

“The *Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Sharing Plan* commenced in 2004 following development by the Murrumbidgee River Management Committee”.

“While the plan contained rules for water diversions to the Lowbidgee Flood Control and Irrigation District (the Lowbidgee) under a legislative power, the Lowbidgee was not included in the Murrumbidgee Regulated River water source when the original water sharing plan was drafted.

“This is because of the complexity of the river system, internal water sharing arrangements and the combination of floodplain management, irrigation and environmental considerations.

“We have sensibly taken time to get a better understanding of how this complex system works so we can bring it into a modern licensing framework with minimal third party impacts.”

Rules for water account management and dealings reflect the approach taken for existing supplementary water access licences in the Plan.

“Effectively, the water sharing plan has been expanded to include the Lowbidgee and an additional area to incorporate the whole of the water body Lake Marimley.”

The Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source now includes water found on the surface of the Lowbidgee with the exception of that found in Lake Tala, Talpee Creek and Five Mile Lagoon.

These lakes and creeks will be included in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Murrumbidgee Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012*.

Mr Harriss said the development of the plan amendments involved extensive consultation and recommendations from a range of water users and community interests.

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“There is no effective increase in water use as the proposed entitlements are based on historic diversions. Rules for sharing opportunities to access announced supplementary water events across the Murrumbidgee are clarified but essentially remain unchanged.”

“The plan amendment introduces water trading into the Lowbidgee and enables businesses flexibility to change and adapt to future demands and climatic circumstances.”

Under the Commonwealth *Water Act 2007*, the Plan is regarded as a transitional water resource plan. The plan amendments will ensure that historical Lowbidgee water use is considered in the benchmark for the Murrumbidgee against which any changes under the Commonwealth’s proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan may be addressed.

“All water licence holders affected by the changes to the Murrumbidgee Regulated River plan will shortly receive information on what the plan means to their respective activities for accessing water,” Mr Harriss said.

Copies of the water sharing plan and supporting information can be obtained from the NSW Office of Water website – [www.water.nsw.gov.au](http://www.water.nsw.gov.au)

**ENDS**

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