



Flows into Narran Lakes a welcome relief

Objectives	To reconnect rivers in the Lower Balonne and further downstream. To ensure more water stays in the system and reaches Narran Lakes to rebuild critical habitat.
Start date	11 February 2020.
Target areas	Lower Balonne rivers, the Darling River and Narran Lakes Ramsar Site.

The combined effort of governments, local water licence holders and community representatives has meant that increased flows are now starting to reach the internationally significant Narran Lakes.

Who has been contributing to these flows?

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO), Queensland government and private water licence holders have all contributed to this event.

Water protected under Queensland water planning arrangements provided the foundation for this flow. Queensland enforced flow management rules to reduce the amount of take by irrigators by 10 percent on 21-25 February and 1-5 March 2020.

As of 5 March, approximately 139 gigalitres of Commonwealth water for the environment has been left instream to increase flows so far. This is made up of ~83 gigalitres from the permanent overland flow licences and ~56 gigalitres from unsupplemented water allocations. The CEWO also secured ~8 GL of water from a pilot project that will reach the Narran Lakes.

[Cubbie Station has also provided a voluntary contribution](#) of 10 gigalitres to this flow - most of which went down the Culgoa River.



A dry Narran River channel – upstream from Bangate Bridge – 7 December 2019 (CEWO).



Narran River flowing at ~2,500ML/d upstream from Bangate Bridge – 28 February 2020 (CEWO).

Flows to date

The flow peaked at St George on 27 February at over 196,000 megalitres per day – with a total volume of more than 1,363 gigalitres on 5 March 2020.

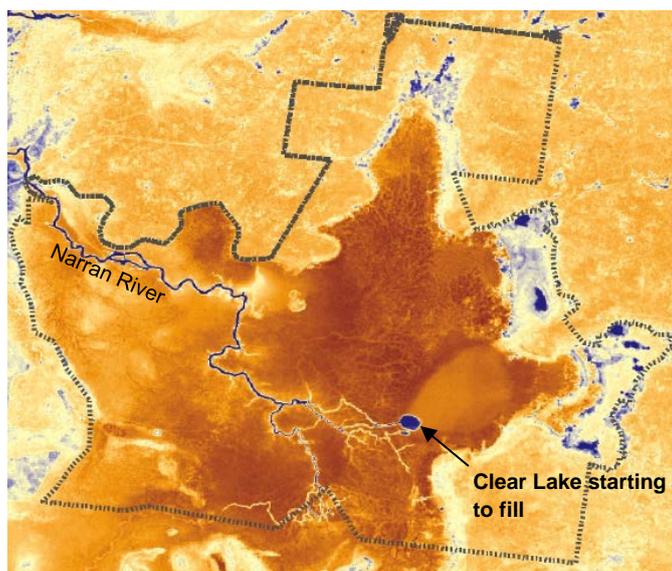
Flows from the Culgoa are now flowing in the Darling. The Birrie and Bokhara rivers are flowing in reaches downstream of Goodooga. Flows in the Narran River reached the Narran Lakes on Saturday



29 February and as of 5 March, more than six gigalitres had started to fill the lakes.



Flow entering the top of the parched Narran Lakes Nature Reserve on Saturday 29 February (Glenn Sands).



Inflows starting to fill Clear Lake on Sunday 1 March – the dotted line is the Ramsar site boundary (MDBA).

Update on the pilot project, which has enabled more water to reach Narran Lakes

The CEWO's pilot project to help more water flow into a core part of the Narran Lakes has now been successfully completed. The pilot added ~8 gigalitres of water to other flows entering Narran. The extra water is a valuable contribution to the lakes.

The pilot was implemented when rainfall was forecast to produce mid-sized flows (250GL – 500GL). With heavier than expected rainfall, the CEWO responded to the changing conditions and deactivated the pilot.

The pilot is one way the CEWO can top-up the Commonwealth's water to achieve more environmental outcomes at important sites such as Narran Lakes.

Monitoring

Monitoring began on 1 March ahead of the flows reaching the core rookery habitat at Narran Lakes.

Early monitoring is showing animals are emerging from the dry lake bed and important bird-nesting plants are getting a much needed drink.

The monitoring is a collaborative effort between CEWO, NSW and Queensland government agencies, the University of New England and the Narran Lakes Joint Management Committee. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority has also been tracking the flows via satellite technology.



Rhonda Ashby and Brendan Welsh, Narran Lakes Joint Management Committee members, surveying waterbird breeding habitat before the site is inundated (CEWO).

What's next

The preliminary monitoring results will be shared with members of the community in an update next week along with people's reactions to the flow.

Want to know more?

- Web: <https://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/attachment/rebuilding-waterbird-habitat-narran-lakes>
- Email: ewater@environment.gov.au
- Follow us on Twitter: @thecewh
- Contact our Local Engagement Officer Jason Wilson on Jason.Wilson@environment.gov.au or 0418 210 389.

The Department acknowledges the traditional owners of Gomerioi country and all country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures and to their elders both past and present.