



# Lower Balonne Flow 2021 – Update # 1

## Objectives

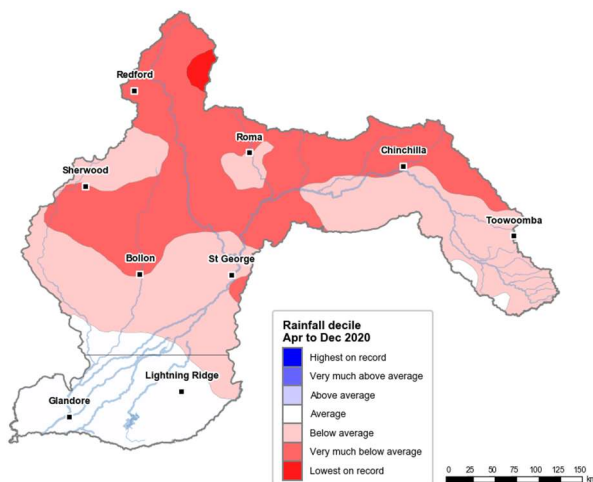
Reconnect rivers in the Lower Balonne and further downstream.  
Inundate Narran Lakes to continue rebuilding critical waterbird breeding habitat.

## Target areas

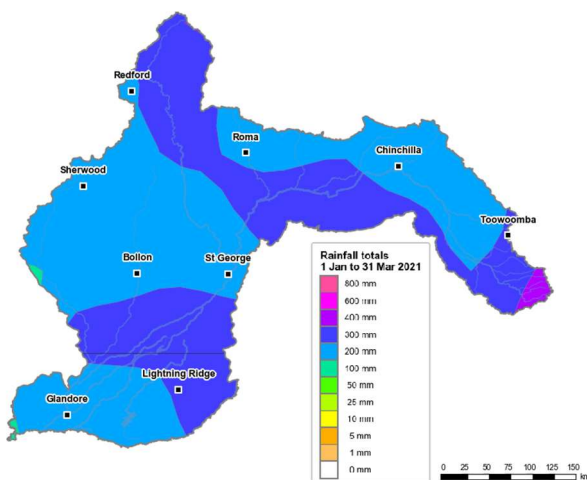
Lower Balonne rivers, Narran Lakes Ramsar site, and the Darling River.

## Recent rainfall

Following [flows](#) in early 2020, most of the upper Condamine catchment experienced below or very much below average rainfall for the remainder of the year (see the first map below). However, since October 2020, there has been periodic rainfall across the catchment, with good falls in March this year – some areas received up to 200mm (see second map).



Rainfall ranges between April and December 2020. Image: BoM



Three monthly rainfall totals for January to March 2021. Image: BoM

## Recent flows

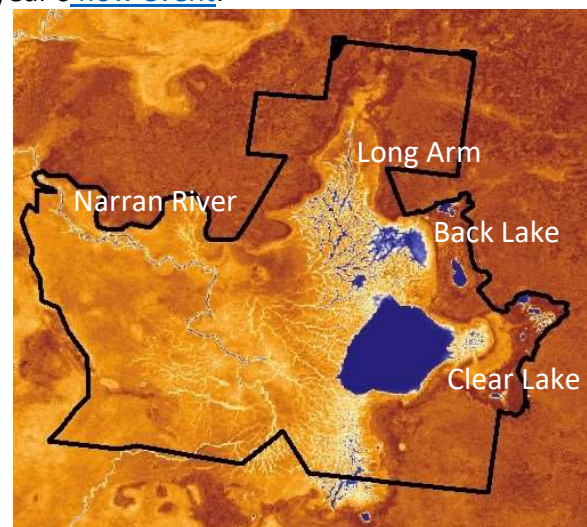
Natural inflows occurring periodically from November 2020 – April 2021 (managed under Queensland water planning arrangements) have provided a foundation for the Lower Balonne flow event.

Since January, more than 325 gegalitres (GL) has passed the St George gauge. This includes around 45 GL of Commonwealth water for the environment that was left instream to enhance flows from March to mid-April.



Balonne River flowing at 14,740 ML/day downstream of Whyenbah Bridge on 31 March 2021. Photo: CEWO

As of 15 April, more than 22 GL had reached the Narran Lakes, inundating key waterbird breeding habitat. This water will help build on the environmental benefits achieved from last year's [flow event](#).



Satellite image showing the 1,010 ha of waterbird breeding habitat inundated in the Narran Lakes Nature Reserve as of 12 April 2021. Source: MDBA



## How are things at Narran Lakes?

CEWO staff visited Narran Lakes in March 2021 ahead of the recent flows and were pleased to see some waterbird breeding habitat had responded well to the flows in [early 2020](#) and recent rainfall.



Above: Acting Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Hilton Taylor with Local Engagement Officer Jason Wilson visiting Narran Lakes in late March 2021 ahead of the floodwater. Below: Local Engagement Officer Jane Humphries observing lignum flowering following inundation and rainfall at Clear Lake. Photos: CEWO



Lignum provides important waterbird breeding habitat and is culturally significant – fresh growth tips are a valuable source of food and the plant itself is used for weaving.

## What is being monitored?

Ongoing [vegetation](#), fish and waterbird monitoring continues to track responses to the flows since early 2020. These projects have found some signs of environmental recovery following several years of severe drought. Monitoring over the coming months will measure the environmental response to the recent flows.



Black winged stilts foraging along the edge of the inflows into Clear Lake during early April 2021. Photo: CEWO



Ecologist Doug Harding holding a golden perch (or 'dhagaay' in Gamilaraay/ Kamilaroi language) caught near the Woolerbilla gauge along the Culgoa River in October 2020. Photo: Qld DNRDW

## In other news...

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office is working with Qld and NSW agencies to trial the tracking of Commonwealth water for the environment that passes the Qld/NSW border in real-time. This project will enable Commonwealth water for the environment to be protected in NSW rivers downstream.

## More information

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***The CEWO acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the Condamine-Balonne and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. We pay our respects to them and their elders both past and present.***