



Lower Balonne Flow-MER – Opportunities on Country

Flow-MER is a program run by the [Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder \(CEWH\)](#) to undertake monitoring, evaluation and research (MER) on the outcomes of environmental water delivery to provide information to support environmental water management in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The CEWH is committed to partnering and working meaningfully with Aboriginal People in the planning, delivery and monitoring of water for the environment. This includes providing opportunities to empower and support Aboriginal People to care for Country and building partnerships with Aboriginal People in ways that they determine. [Learn more about this on the CEWH's website.](#)

The program has been running for several years with three new MER areas added to the program in 2024 including the Lower Balonne River region.

The CEWH has listened to Aboriginal partners by increasing targeted investment in Flow-MER for Aboriginal contribution and participation, in ways that they determine and based on the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) Centre for Ecosystem Science has been engaged by the CEWH to conduct Flow-MER activities in the Lower Balonne River region including the internationally significant, Ramsar-protected Narran Lakes (Dharriwaa).

The current program runs from July 2024 until June 2029 with MER activities informing the below themes:

- Cultural outcomes (determined by Aboriginal People)
- River flows and connectivity
- Native vegetation
- Waterbirds
- Native fish.

The Lower Balonne Flow-MER project team is headed up by UNSW's Dr Kate Brandis, who works with researchers and others to undertake the work.

Aboriginal People's MER

The Dharriwaa Elders Group and Narran Lakes Nature Reserve Joint Management Committee are the cultural advisors for the Lower Balonne region and will support relationship building between Aboriginal People with connection to Country and UNSW staff. Cultural advisors will work with Aboriginal People with connection to Country to:

- Facilitate knowledge sharing between Aboriginal People, and between Aboriginal People and UNSW staff
- Identify opportunities and activities to support the values and aspirations of Aboriginal People
- Facilitate opportunities for Aboriginal People to be involved in the design and implementation of Flow-MER projects and activities.

In working together, UNSW will support the protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty rights as appropriate for the Aboriginal People that we work with.

More information

Please contact Kate Brandis at kate.brandis@unsw.edu.au or the UNSW's Flow-MER Communications Officer, Jane Howard, at jane.howard@unsw.edu.au for more information or if you would like to be involved in the program.

We are excited to support joint learning about the magnificent Lower Balonne River region and its cultural and biological diversity.

Image: Narran Lakes during an Australian Pelican breeding event, March 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal People as the Traditional Custodians of the land and waters of the Murray-Darling Basin and pay respect to their Elders past and present. We recognise their intrinsic cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to Country.