



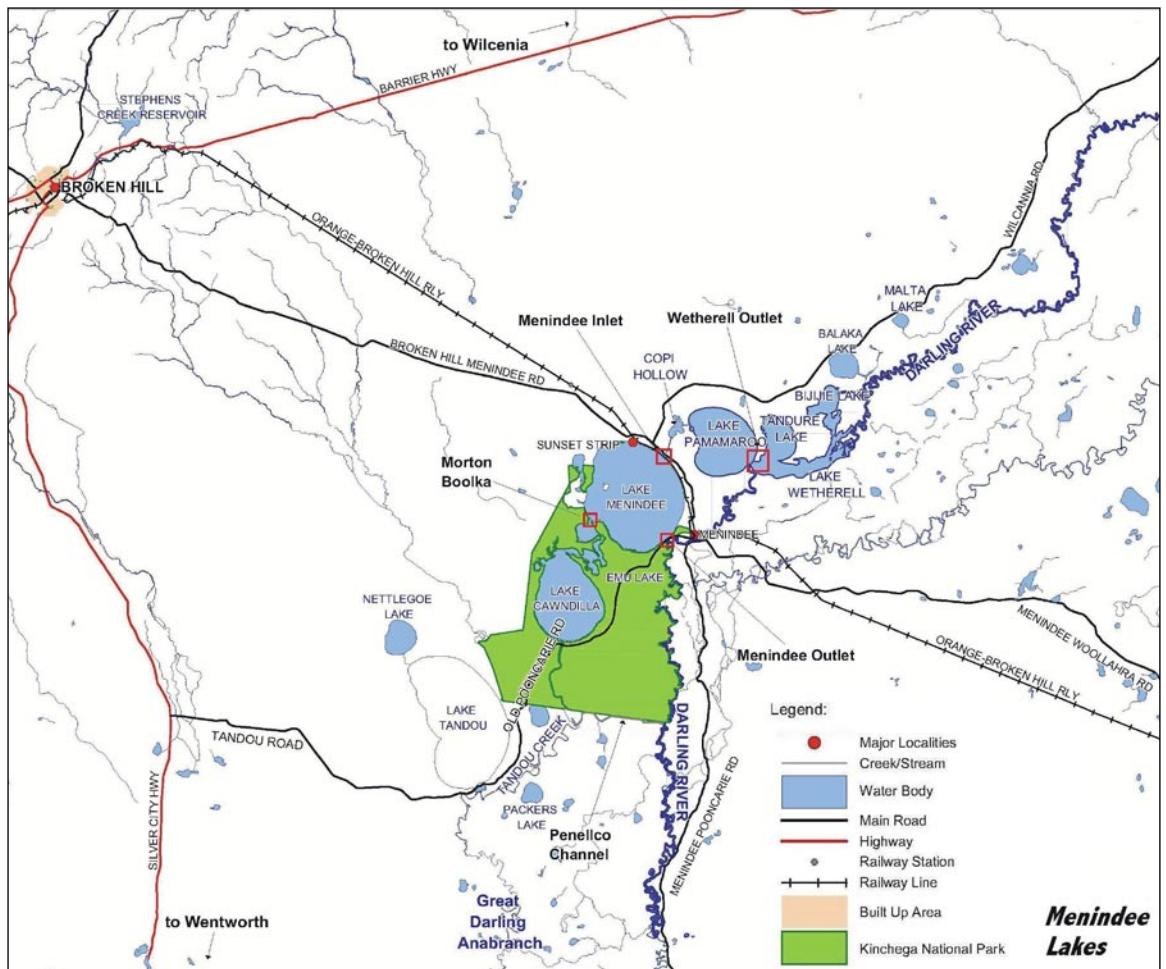
November 2008

## Community update Number 1

The Darling River Water Saving Project is a feasibility study jointly funded by the NSW and Australian Governments examining options for securing substantial water savings in the NSW Darling River system, including the Menindee Lakes. The project will deliver a 20-year strategic plan for the troubled river system. It complements state and national activities aimed at improving water management in the Murray-Darling Basin, increasing environmental flow availability, and other benefits including security of water supply to Broken Hill.

Planning has been underway for some years to develop infrastructure improvements and linked operational changes aimed at improving local drought security and reducing evaporation of stored water at Menindee Lakes. The previous investigations culminated with the Menindee Lakes Structural Works Project, which was completed in June 2005. The Structural Works Project recommended works and minor operational changes, which had the potential to realise water savings of about 5 GL per annum on average. These works were appraised in the environmental impact statement in August 2006.

Subsequent review indicated that a more aggressive approach to the operation of the Menindee Lakes, as well as a review of institutional arrangements and upstream efficiency measures could realise significantly greater water savings. These options were scoped in Part A of the project.



Sinclair Knight Merz and Webb McKeown and Associates have now been commissioned to undertake Part B of the Project, building on the six water savings schemes identified in consultation with the community in 2006-07 during Part A.

A Steering Committee, chaired by Mr Tony Wright, will oversee the project. The Committee will report to a joint Government Officials Committee comprising representatives from the Australian Government Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, the NSW Department of Water and Energy and the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change.

## Achieving water savings

Part B of the Darling River Water Saving Project will investigate substantial water saving projects across the NSW part of the Darling Basin. Initially, it will further develop the water savings options identified in Part A for the Menindee Lakes in order to best achieve:

- Reduced evaporation from Menindee Lakes
- A secure water supply for Broken Hill and local high security water users
- Improve operational flexibility of river and water storage management
- Delivery of water for the environment.

The local community and key stakeholder organisations will be consulted about the development of the preferred water savings scheme.

As a first step towards implementation, a Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA) of the preferred scheme for Menindee Lakes will be prepared. The EA will assess potential impacts arising from construction or operation of proposals on hydrology, ecology, cultural heritage and land and water quality. Economic and social impacts will also be assessed.

Part B also includes development of longer-term strategic plan initiatives, which aim to secure water savings from the upper Darling River system. This strategic plan will outline a program for the staged implementation of the preferred schemes over a 20-year period. Implementation would be in the context of the basin plan.

## What are water savings?

Water savings are achieved by reducing losses from the river system. Losses occur mainly through evaporation from major storages, farm dams and ring tanks and through seepage into the bed of rivers and lakes.

The project has a focus on reducing evaporation from the Menindee Lakes, as it represents the largest single evaporative loss from the managed water supply system, up to 425 GL in an average year.

The project also aims to develop longer-term strategic initiatives to secure water savings from the upper Darling Basin, including:

- On-farm efficiency measures relating to farm storage dams and on farm irrigation processes
- Market based measures
- Infrastructure projects at locations other than the Menindee Lakes.
- Regulatory measures in the context of water sharing plan reviews

## Six schemes are being assessed

The six schemes being examined under Part B focus on structural works, the operating regime of the Menindee Lakes and regulatory measures. Each features variations which address the two critical issues of reducing evaporative losses and securing the water supply for Broken Hill and local high security water users.

Each of these schemes is described in detail in the Part A Project Report, which is available on the DWE website.

### Overview of schemes for initial consideration

Scheme	Description of Core Initiative
1	Reduced use of Lake Menindee
2	Reduced use of Lake Cawndilla
3	Reduced use of both Lake Menindee and Lake Cawndilla
4	Partition Lake Menindee, reduce the use of the lower Lake Menindee cell and reduce the use of Lake Cawndilla
5	Partition Lake Menindee and reduce the use of the lower Lake Menindee cell
6	More rapid drawdown of Menindee Lakes when in NSW control

## What happens next?

The project team will be undertaking a detailed review and further development of the water savings options for Menindee Lakes. During this phase, there will be a thorough evaluation of the impacts of changes at the Menindee Lakes on Broken Hill's water supply, the local environment, the local community and downstream water users.

The project team expects to be able to report on its findings before mid 2009. The major project stages are outlined below.

### Project timeframe

Timing	Activity	Current status
Mid 2007	DRWSP Part A Report completed	
November 2008	Commencement of DRWSP Part B	◀ We are here
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1800 number and website established</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute community update 1</li> </ul>	
Stage 1	Further develop water saving schemes	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted consultation with key stakeholders</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with local indigenous community</li> </ul>	
	General community consultation	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sessions in six key locations</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute community update 2</li> </ul>	
Stage 2	Develop preferred water savings scheme	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis and community input</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft strategic plan</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary environmental assessment</li> </ul>	
Stage 3	Darling River Water Saving Strategy	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final strategy released</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute community update 3</li> </ul>	
September 2009	Project completed	

The next round of consultation with Aboriginal communities and their representatives in the Menindee Lakes, Broken Hill and Dareton areas of the Darling River will commence in the week of 24 November 2008. The cultural and spiritual significance of the Menindee Lakes and the Darling River system for Aboriginal People, locally, regionally and nationally cannot be understated. Feedback will be given on what progress has been achieved, future directions and ways in which members of the community can be involved. Information will be shared through a series of informal meetings or small group get-togethers in Menindee, Broken Hill and Dareton.

## Have your say

The project team will consult widely with key stakeholder organisations and the local community. Cultural heritage considerations will be a key focus on consultation with local Aboriginal communities.

Towards the middle of 2009, information sessions will be conducted in Broken Hill, Menindee, and other areas within the Murray-Darling Basin. These information sessions will provide an opportunity for the community to be informed about the progress of the project and to have a say on the issues associated with the development of the strategic plan. Comments from the community are welcome at any stage during the project.

For further information, please call 1800 778 900

Email: [information@dwe.nsw.gov.au](mailto:information@dwe.nsw.gov.au) (quoting Darling River Water Saving Project)

Visit the website at [www.dwe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dwe.nsw.gov.au)

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