

Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer

April 2010

ACTEW Corporation is committed to providing a safe, secure and sustainable water supply for the people of the ACT and region. The Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer is a key component in ACTEW's long term plan to ensure water security.

What is the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer?

The Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer involves transferring water from the Murrumbidgee River through a 13 kilometre underground pipeline to Burra Creek in NSW. The water will then flow approximately 10 kilometres down Burra Creek into Googong Reservoir.

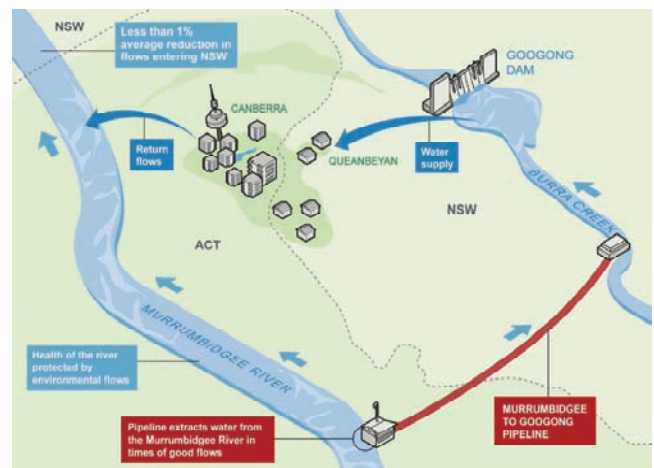
Why is it needed?

The Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer together with the enlargement of the Cotter Dam will:

- reduce the severity of future water restrictions;
- increase the diversity of water sources supplying the ACT region, for example, should the Cotter catchment again be impacted by severe bushfires; and
- provide additional supply into Googong Reservoir (inflows into Googong Reservoir have decreased by about 85 per cent during the period from 2001 to 2008).

The NSW Government declared the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer to be a "critical infrastructure project" under Section 75 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. This recognises the urgent need to implement the project to secure water supply for the region, while still providing for the rigorous scrutiny of any environmental impacts.

Further information about critical infrastructure status can be obtained on the NSW Department of Planning website www.planning.nsw.gov.au



How the project will contribute to the ACT and region's water supply

What's been happening lately?

Environmental Impact Statement and Approvals

On 14 April 2010, the NSW Minister for Planning the Hon. Tony Kelly MLC announced the approval of the NSW portion of the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer. This approval follows the public exhibition of the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in August 2009.

In finalising the EIS for lodgement with the NSW Department of Planning and the ACT Planning and Land Authority, ACTEW prepared responses to all issues raised by the community during the public exhibition period and in written submissions.

The ACT Planning and Land Authority is in the final stages of assessment of the EIS. Once the Minister has deemed the EIS to be complete, the Development Application process will commence. ACTEW is hoping that the EIS assessment process will conclude shortly, allowing the Development Application to be lodged in May 2010. A period of public exhibition of the Development Application will occur once it is lodged.

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ACTEW working with ActewAGL

The project was also referred to the Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) in October 2009, for further consideration on the predicted impacts to high quality Box Gum Grassy Woodland Endangered Ecological Communities, Pink-tailed Worm Lizard habitats, as well as Trout Cod and Macquarie Perch habitats.

On 20 November 2009, DEWHA advised ACTEW that the proposed action was considered a Controlled Action under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. The project is therefore being assessed by Public Environment Report (PER). The draft PER was lodged with the Commonwealth on 21 April 2010 and public exhibition commenced on Friday 23 April for a period of 20 working days.

You can view a copy of the draft PER at the Civic Library, ACT Government Shopfronts, and the Queanbeyan Library or view both the PER and EIS on the ACTEW website www.actew.com.au

If all approvals are granted, construction is anticipated to commence before the end of 2010 and will take approximately 15-18 months.

Protecting our environment

ACTEW takes its environmental responsibilities very seriously and will work with the community, local environment groups and agencies to ensure a high standard of environmental management will guide the construction and operation of the project. The EIS features over 70 commitments that will mitigate and minimise any potential adverse impacts of the project.

Now that NSW approval has been given to the project, ACTEW will work closely with the NSW Office of Water and the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water to prepare the appropriate Construction Environment Management Plans and supporting documentation to allow construction to commence.

ACTEW is committed to high quality, long-term rehabilitation of affected land and will work closely with landholders to ensure land is restored to original condition or better. Where it is not possible to avoid impacting good quality native vegetation a biodiversity offset strategy will be implemented to compensate for any vegetation loss. This involves setting aside a large contiguous piece of similar land located in the project area which will be dedicated towards a long term native revegetation program.

Working to improve the health of the Murrumbidgee and protect Burra Creek

ACTEW's commitments in relation to the Murrumbidgee to Googong Water Transfer will establish an adaptive management program to monitor the health of the Murrumbidgee River and Burra Creek, and ensure that no adverse ecological changes are taking place.

The monitoring program will be based on the highly successful Cotter catchment monitoring program which ACTEW has been undertaking for the last 10 years. The program will support other ecological management projects, such as the Upper Murrumbidgee Demonstration Reach project, linked to the ACT Natural Resource Management Council.

The monitoring program will also be used to inform and target ACTEW's Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment source water protection program, which is helping to ensure the long term health of the Murrumbidgee River.

Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy

ACTEW has committed to offsetting all greenhouse gas emissions associated with the construction and operation of the project through a number of options including the use of biodiesel during construction and high efficiency energy use.

We are also building a mini-hydro electric generator to recover around 25-30 percent of the energy required to transfer the water and reduce associated operating costs. The mini-hydro will be co-located with the Burra Creek discharge structure upstream of the junction of Williamsdale and Burra Roads.

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