

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Phil Costa**  
**Minister for Water**  
**Minister for Corrective Services**



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### **\$39 MILLION ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW SCHEME TO IMPROVE HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN RIVER**

The Keneally Government today announced the start of new environmental flows for the Hawkesbury-Nepean River following the completion of a \$39 million upgrade to dams and weirs across the system.

NSW Minister for Water, Phil Costa said the new environmental flows were a major investment in one of Sydney's most important river systems and a key part of the **NSW Government's Metropolitan Water Plan** to secure water for people and the environment.

"Overall the new environmental flow rules will see a tenfold increase in the amount of water released to restore the health of one of Sydney's most iconic waterways," Minister Costa said.

"The Hawkesbury-Nepean is the lifeblood of greater Sydney – it's a place where families come to enjoy time together and it's also a vital natural asset.

"Families returning to the river over the coming years will notice better water quality, more native fish and birds and fewer weeds.

"These environmental flows will help protect the endangered giant dragonfly and macquarie perch as well as 10 other native fish species including the vulnerable Australian grayling, the Australian bass, Australian smelt, a range of gudgeon, mullet and galaxias species and freshwater herring that depend on the river system.

"It will also help protect local animals including the azure kingfisher, black bittern, pectoral sandpiper, white-bellied sea eagle and large footed myotis, a fishing bat."

"The start of these new environmental flows marks the completion of a massive \$39 million upgrade to our system of dams and weirs that allow these environmental flows to take place."

#### **Benefits of the new flows include:**

- Improve native fish breeding
- Reduce weeds
- Improve water quality
- Provide better habitats for native wildlife

"Previously, 24 million litres a day was released from the dams regardless of inflows and rainfall - now more water released downstream when it rain, and less during dry times, therefore mimicking the natural flows of the river," said Mr Costa.

"The major improvements to the weirs along the river help the new flows make it downstream and have modified or replaced fishways to allow fish to move more freely up and down the river and breed.

“These new environmental flows better mimic the natural flows of the river – the amount of water that is released is calculated each day based how much water flows into the dams from the catchments.

“It is a key part of our plan to secure water for people and the environment under the NSW Government’s Metropolitan Water Plan.”

**Upgrade includes:**

- \$800,000 upgrade to Cataract Dam
- \$1 million upgrade to Cordeaux Dam
- \$1.4 million upgrade to Nepean Dams
- \$4.8 million upgrade to the Broughtons Pass and Pheasants Nest weirs
- \$31.3 million upgrade to Camden, Sharpes, Cobbity, Theresa Park, Mount Hunter, Menangle, Brownlow Hill, Wallacia, Penrith and Douglas Park weirs to allow for increased flows and fish passage.

The Member for Mulgoa Diane Beamer said: “These new environmental flows will have flow-on effects for all river users and I’m looking forward to hearing feedback from communities along the river as we begin to see improvements,” Ms Beamer said.

The Member for Londonderry, Allan Shearan, said: “The Hawkesbury-Nepean River system supports a \$259 million agriculture industry — by protecting the river health we are also securing the future of the vital industries it supports.”

The Member for Camden, Geoff Corrigan, said: “While environmental flows have been in place since 2001, this new system of environmental flows will see the amount of water sent downstream increase tenfold on average but more importantly they will deliver greater benefits for the river.”

The Member for Riverstone, John Aquilina, said: “From recent science we know in order to mimic the natural flows of the river we need an environmental flows system that varies according to rainfall patterns. This is going to benefit the whole river.”

**NSW Government projects to improve the Hawkesbury-Nepean River include:**

- The Greater Metropolitan Water Sharing Plans which set rules in place to protect water for the environment in greater Sydney for the next 10 years
- the establishment of the Office of the Hawkesbury Nepean in March 2009 to deliver a one-stop-shop for all river users of the iconic waterway
- \$209 million Replacement Flows Scheme that will release 18 billion litres of recycled water a year to the Hawkesbury-Nepean River to improve river health by reducing nutrient discharges, and help secure water supplies in Warragamba Dam
- A significant project over the next four years to determine new variable environmental flows from Warragamba Dam to improve river health
- \$77.4 million across seven projects under the federally funded Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Project which includes the metering of water extraction to monitor the real time usage and enable better management of our water resource.

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