Improving water planning processes - priorities for the next five years in the Murray-Darling Basin

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accredited water resource plans (2012 – 2019)

Commonwealth $

E-water plans (2012?)

a lot of collaboration

The benefits of the proposed reductions in water extraction depends on how well these are done.
Some areas needing additional emphasis over the next five years

- Greater integration of groundwater and surface water management
- Greater integration of natural resource investment plans and water allocation plans
- Building resilience in the irrigation industry
- Improving the rigour and transparency of water resource planning
- Governance
Greater integration of groundwater and surface water management

- In the Basin more than 60% of groundwater systems highly connected to river systems

- Integrated management could expand options for water users, eg:
  - Cross system trade
  - Areas where increased gw use possible if river offsets allowed

- Currently at early stages of development

- BP does not constrain, but could drive through accreditation process
Greater integration of NR plans and water allocation plans

- Ecosystem preservation at risk if other threats not also addressed (channel modification, poor water quality, introduced species, loss of riparian vegetation, stock access, instream obstructions, catchment disturbance)

- Opportunity to coordinate NRM investment with water management through coordination of water plans and NRM plans

- Happening in some areas, but plenty of room for further development across the Basin

- Out of scope for BP, relies on collaborative effort
Building resilience in the irrigation industry

- Climate change scenarios – a range of plausible futures, not definite predictions
- New paradigm in water management is the focus on managing for future uncertainty
- Increased emphasis on hedging rather than maximising now needed
- WRPs can expand options available
Increased options through water management arrangements in WRPs

- Water trade

- Holding water in reserve through:
  - System dams - regulated river system carryover
  - Aquifer storage – groundwater carryover
  - Aquifer storage – injection and recovery
  - On farm storages

- Unbundling – including capacity sharing

- Facilitating conjunctive use of multiple sources

*Providing options should be a major strategy in WRPs, rather than a secondary issue*
Improving the rigour of water resource planning

- Planning an evolving discipline
- Opportunity to drive best practice through accreditation process
  - Robust assessments
  - Use of risk management approaches
  - Effective engagement
  - Well structured understandable plans with clear objectives and logic
  - Adaptable rather than rigid
  - Fair and transparent processes and decision making
Governance

- Coordination
  - Multiple state agencies?
  - Role of local govt? CMAs?
  - Water committees?
  - E-water owners and managers?
- Funding for planning?