



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

Upper-Namoi Water in the Landscape Initiative launch

Background materials

Campbell Howard Room,
UNE Tamworth Study Centre,
24 Fitzroy Street, Tamworth
Monday 8th May 2023, 10.30 am.

Contents

1. Statement of intent – Upper-Namoi “Water in the Landscape Initiative”
The concept, basic principles, and the link to the online form to ‘sign on’ to participate directly in the WILI.
 - a. Appendices:Additional Information
 - b. Initial Opportunities – a list of relevant current grant applications
2. Potential Collaborative Project Opportunities
3. Governance and Management Concepts (for discussion and development)
4. Interim Steering Committee Principles (for discussion as required)



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

Statement of intent – Upper-Namoi “Water in the Landscape Initiative”

This document expresses the intention of the participating organisations to collaborate in projects to support the water and landscape interests of stakeholders in the upper-Namoi, and sets out the basic principles of the arrangement. This document does not create legally binding obligations on any party. The parties may subsequently commit to particular projects or agreements which may arise from this collaboration. This statement does authorise the participants to refer to the organisations who signal their willingness to be noted as participating in statement in communications or documents that concern this initiative.

Overview

This collaboration is called “The Upper-Namoi Water in the Landscape Initiative”, and may be referred to as the “WITLI”. Its purpose is to facilitate collaborative projects, programs or initiatives to optimise economic, social and environmental value and sustainability of freshwater in upper-Namoi catchments, (roughly 250 metres or more above sea-level). The Upper-Namoi Water in the Landscape Initiative is to be community (rather than expert or politician) led. The principal stakeholders are non-government landholder organisations, rural communities, and rural industries, and the University of New England as a provider of knowledge and supports, and as a stakeholder in research and other opportunities which may arise from WITLI activities. Local Governments, State or National Government agencies with a concern for the interests of the principal stakeholders may fully participate in this initiative.

This statement is intentionally broad. The first general meeting of the entity shall happen between March 1st 2024 and April 30th 2024 at which the signatories may decide whether it should be replaced, amended or retained.

1.	Scope	With particular regard to the upper-Namoi catchments as defined: a. Within-tenure and trans-tenure work to manage and use water to maximise sustainable production and ecological values, with particular attention to resilience in the face of rainfall variation. b. Community and urban water management initiatives, to improve reliability, sustainability and community welfare, and production value from water. c. The development and application of relevant knowledge, capabilities, technology and other intellectual resources to these ends.
----	-------	--



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

		<p>d. Systematic application, testing and refinement of knowledge, technology and methods relevant to its purpose.</p> <p>e. Public and community education on water in the landscape/landscape resilience in the Upper-Namoi.</p> <p>f. Strengthening the social capital of the region, through collaboration and cooperation, and the conduct of joint endeavours.</p>
2.	Steering Group	<p>The activities of the WITLI shall be managed by a steering group representing the following stakeholders</p> <p>a. Private rural landholders.</p> <p>b. Public agencies which are rural landholders.</p> <p>c. Urban water users (including industry).</p> <p>d. The University of New England.</p> <p>The Steering Group may invite observers or other stakeholders to advise or participate.</p>
3.	Steering Group selection	<p>Other than the initial interim Steering Group listed in Appendix 1, Steering Groups shall be selected at the Annual Meetings of WITLI</p>
4.	Program supervision	<p>The Steering Group shall be responsible for the strategic direction of WITLI projects within an overall program. Individual projects shall have a Project Management team, accountable to the Steering Group. Appendix 2 lists 5 initial program opportunities which the WITLI intends to pursue.</p> <p>The Steering Group shall also be responsible for monitoring and evaluating projects and programs, and for communication related to these.</p> <p>It is intended that the work of WITLI will be supported by external grants and other funding, to the maximum extent possible.</p>
5.	Education and capacity building	<p>A role of the WITLI is to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to manage water in the landscape, consistent with its purpose, and to carry out specified projects. Capacity building shall be addressed at levels from schooling through to community capacity building, extension and university research.</p>
6.	Data and information	<p>A role of the WITLI is to ensure that stakeholders and decision makers can access reliable monitoring and testing data, and useful models. Part of this is to ensure that stakeholders can access appropriate information to inform their decisions and actions.</p> <p>It is a general principle of WITLI that (to the maximum extent feasible) data and information shall be freely accessible to stakeholders.</p>
7.	Policy development	<p>A role of the WITLI is to support the development of supportive local, state and national policies, particularly those concerning the Murray-</p>



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

	and advocacy	Darling catchments, rural lands and environment management, and community water management.
8.	University of New England	<p>Subject to specific agreements and to financial feasibility, the University of New England will provide research and education services, information and facilities.</p> <p>It is intended that WITLI will provide the university with opportunities of benefit to students and researchers, and opportunities to demonstrate community engagement and research impact.</p>
9.	Facilities	<p>A Tamworth “Service Hub” with community access to appropriate resources will be provided by arrangement with the University of New England, or otherwise if the university is unable to provide this. These resources may include literature, online access to digital resources, maps, and access to models. Community or student generated intelligence, good practice demonstrations, and information about practices and technologies.</p> <p>By agreement WITLI participating stakeholders may also have a presence through these facilities.</p> <p>The WITLI shall facilitate the availability of local demonstration and testing sites, for the purposes of this collaboration.</p> <p>Other facilities may be developed including potentially an urban water and energy smart demonstration house.</p>
	Governance	<p>The Steering Group shall be the ultimate decision makers for the operation of WITLI, but shall not have the power to bind individual stakeholders contractually.</p> <p>It is intended that decisions shall be taken through consensus, and if this is not feasible then steering group shall organise a meeting of all participating stakeholders to determine that matter.</p> <p>The Steering Group may develop agreements and governance arrangements subject to ratification by all participating stakeholders.</p>
11	Confirmation of participation	<p>Participants can confirm their participation, or withdraw at any time, by notification of their intention at https://unesurveys.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1z4QGleYXHpncEu.</p>



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

Appendix 1: Additional information

Interim Steering Group (contact for further details):

Wayne Chaffey (Tamworth Regional Landcare) M: 0400 358 217. Email: wayne_chaffey@yahoo.com.au

George Macdonald (Wallabadah Community) M: 01414851302. Email: georgem181059@gmail.com

Martin Thoms (University of New England) M: 0423 780 516. Email: mthoms2@une.edu.au

Paul Martin (University of New England) M: 0416015161. Email: pmartin9@une.edu.au

Paul Bennett (Tamworth Regional Council) M: (02) 6767 5555. Email: p.bennett@tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Bruce Logan (Tamworth Regional Council) M: (02) 6767 5555. Email: b.logan@tamworth.nsw.gov.au

Publicly available background information can be found at:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2bp2vst0pkhwqpg/AABXixldwixC8kXYHR_0pa6ta?dl=0



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

Appendix 2: initial opportunities

The following list indicates collaborative opportunities which have been initially identified, and grant applications focused on water in the Upper-Namoi landscape. This list is not definitive of the opportunities which may be prioritised for action.

GRANT APPLICATIONS SINCE 2022				
No	TITLE	FUNDER	STATUS	VALUE
1	Evaluation of River Restoration Activities	NSW Northwest LLS	Funded	\$150K
2	Can we do it better? Understanding social decision making in landscape restoration	NSW Northern Tablelands LLS	Funded	\$100K
3	WaterDrop: an approach to enhancing regional water resilience	NSW Environmental Trust Education Program	Awaiting decision May 2023	\$606,208
4	Increasing Water Supply Potential from Highland Catchments; a guide to upland catchment water and land management	National Water Gird	Awaiting decision August 2023	\$3.1m
5	Resilient landscape futures in the Upper Namoi Valley	National Drought Resilience Program	Awaiting decision July 2023	\$4.48m
6	Higher Degree Research Scholarship	UNE	Funded	\$90K
7	Improving the status of floodplain landscapes for agricultural and natural ecosystems	Murray Darling Basin Authority	Awaiting decision April 2023	\$1.4m
8	Habitat improvement in the Peel River	NSW Water	Awaiting decision May 2023	\$500,000
OTHER GRANT APPLICATIONS SINCE 2020				
9	Planning for water resilience of the Tamworth agricultural industries	Agri-Futures Australia	Awaiting decision	\$337,542
10	MDBA – Water, environment research program in collaboration with CSIRO	Murray Darling Basin Authority	Unsuccessful	\$10m
11	Sustainable water footprints for Tamworth	NSW Dept of Education	Unsuccessful	\$1,322,345
12	Human Health and Environmental Change -Consortium with Monash University and 10 other universities	NHMRC	Unsuccessful	\$10m
13	Building resilient NSW communities	NSW Environmental Trust	Unsuccessful	\$554,359



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

2. Potential Collaborative Project Opportunities

The following six areas have been identified for their potential opportunities for research, collaboration, and action;

1. Developing and implementing effective strategies for managing rural and urban water risks in the upper Namoi.
2. Improving the opportunities for agricultural stewardship of water resources in the landscape, including economic incentives (viz sustainable production, economic incentives, and ecosystem service values), capacity building, and support services.
3. Enablement of on-farm water stewardship activities in the region, through capacity building, incentives, and collaboration.
4. Development of targeted education courses/resources and general community educational resources concerning regional hydrology issues.
5. The development of strategies to optimise the water interests of aboriginal people in the upper Namoi. Possible options include maximising the cultural values of water, creating new economic opportunities, and governance engagement.
6. Preparing for changes in water policy and water governance, and policy settings for biodiversity. For details see Paul Martin, Jason Alexandra, Cameron Holley & Martin Thoms (2023) Murray-Darling Basin Plan mark II. What should stakeholders plan for?, Australasian Journal of Water Resources DOI: [10.1080/13241583.2023.2173049](https://doi.org/10.1080/13241583.2023.2173049)



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

3. General Governance and Management Concepts (for discussion and development)

Conceptual governance/management principles to include:

1. Inclusive representation/issues management across the upper Namoi - education, traditional, urban, agricultural, industrial, government, gender, age inclusive - with the single defining element being an interest in water in the landscape.
2. Geographically external stakeholders encouraged to participate as partners.
3. Initially unincorporated but ultimately incorporated to facilitate clarity of leadership, independence and self-funding, as required. UNE to provide initial auspicing services.
4. Initial steering committee drawn from founding stakeholders granted governance and executive powers on an interim basis until first full meeting of members
5. Educative/evidence based approach across all levels and functions.
6. Governance/management principles to be presented/affirmed at first full meeting of members to be held within [6] months along with:
 - a. a Strategic Plan
 - b. a priority target list of actions for next 6 to 12 months.



UPPER NAMOI WATER IN THE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVE

RETHINKING OUR WATER STEWARDSHIP

Background Briefing

4. Interim Steering Committee Principles (for discussion as required)

- Initial Steering Committee (SC) representing TRLA, UNE, TRC and one community member to be affirmed on an interim basis
- SC mandated to carry out the objectives of WILI and the resolutions of WILI stakeholders
- Principles to be formalized in due course but would likely include:
 - Representation from each of TRLA, UNE, LGAs, NSW State Government and the Upper Namoi community
 - Minimum 5 SC members and maximum 7, always being an odd number, plus an independent Chair
 - Independent Chair
 - SC members can resolve to fill a casual vacancy from time to time
 - Chair elected by SC members or, in the absence of an independent Chair, then the TRLA SC representative member for the time being
 - Subject to confirmation by the WILI stakeholders and/or rotation annually
 - SC meetings at least quarterly
 - Minutes and progress report to be circulated to WILI stakeholders within 30 days of a SC meeting