

Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association Inc.
making every drop count

What does the Gwydir Valley Irrigators Association do?

The GVIA represents all irrigators who own water access licences within the Gwydir Valley, including regulated, un-regulated and groundwater entitlements. We have in excess of 400 water entitlement holders in the Gwydir Valley across seven water source areas.

Our vision is for the local irrigation industry, the environment and the Gwydir Valley community to have a secure vibrant future, with Gwydir Valley irrigators recognised as industry leaders.

Our purpose is to represent the irrigation interests of our members at a local, State and Federal level to:

- Secure, protect and enhance your water rights for irrigation;
- Ensure the efficient management and operation of our valley's water resources; and
- Encourage industry profitability and sustainability.

Our services include:

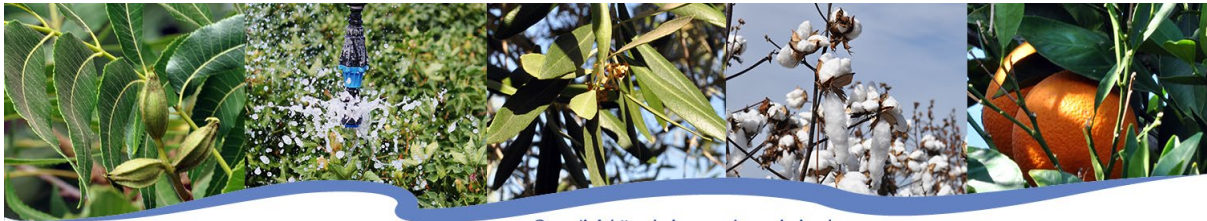
- Member communications and dealings;
- Policy and advocacy;
- Coordination, facilitation and participation; and
- Education, research and extension.

The Association is managed by a committee of a minimum of 11 irrigators and employs an executive officer and a part-time administrative assistant, as well as hosting an externally funded part-time Project Officer position.

The committee oversees the governance of the Association's resources in the interest of all members. The majority of the organisations funds are sourced directly through membership levy requests based on a cost per megalitre of entitlement with 80-90% return rate.

A significant part of the committee's role is to help develop and set the policies and strategies for the Association, of which the Executive Officer implements – some examples of this are provided on the following page. The Executive Officer and committee also provide representation on behalf of members at forums, like the WaterNSW Customer Advisory Group, the Gwydir Environmental Water Advisory Group, the Stakeholder Advisory Panels for surface and groundwater sharing plans, the NSW Irrigators Council and National Irrigators Council meetings and North West Local Land Services Community Advisory Group.

As a member you get a unified voice on industry issues with an aim of securing and protecting your water rights. You will receive regular communication on relevant issues, opportunity to raise issues and provide feedback, as well as the above-mentioned representation.



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Key issues and what are we doing about them?

A key issue, is an action or policy that that can either threaten or enhance any of our core purposes, now and into the future. Some of our current key issues being address include:

The NSW Connectivity Panel Recommendations

The GVIA are very concerned about the implications associated with the recommendations included in the [NSW Connectivity Panel Report](#) released in July 2024.

The NSW water minister has stated that the NSW Government is committed to improving river connectivity based on science, to protect downstream critical human needs and achieve improved environmental outcomes. In this process there seems little regard for the ephemeral nature of the northern basin.

The minister has also indicated that the report reflects the views of the Panel and that it is not government policy and has signalled that the report recommendations for changes that could be made to water sharing plan flow targets to improve connectivity, will be one of the multiple factors taken into consideration when determining what changes need to be made to northern Basin water sharing plans to improve downstream outcomes.

The government are undertaking hydrological and economic analysis of the recommendations to inform their next steps.

The GVIA is working to ensure that we have the evidence to stand up for the water rights of our members. In addition, we are in constant consultation with NSWIC and the northern valleys who are all being targeted in this process.

National Water Agreement

The proposed new NWA is being rushed through federal parliament to meet political aspirations without appropriate consultation, completion of action plans or a proper understanding of the implications incorporated in over 300 principles. The current approach by the federal government is not acceptable, resulting in a document which is not fit for purpose and should not be signed by any state.

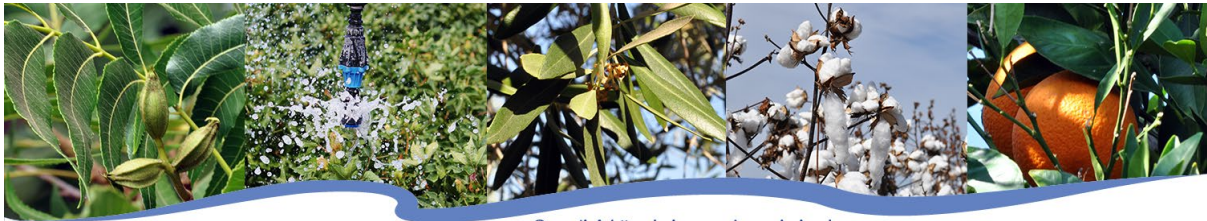
The existing intergovernmental agreement on water (the National Water Initiative) signed in 2004, after ten years of consultation, set the foundations for a nationally compatible market, regulatory and planning based system of managing water resources for rural and urban use that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes. These foundations have not been integrated into the proposed NWA.

The proposed agreement includes several principles that are outside the scope of water management requiring constitutional and institutional reform, and as such should not be included in the agreement. All aspects of any NWA must be addressed transparently, with proper process that respects Australia's democratic values and engages all Australian people. This has not happened with the National Water Agreement discussions to date.

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The GVIA have written to members of NSW parliament asking them not to sign the document. We have also made a submission to the federal government and are working with NIC, NSWIC and other irrigation organisations to do everything we can to block the transition of the document in it's current form.

Aboriginal Water entitlement

There are a number of government documents that we are monitoring at present, including the NSW Aboriginal Water Strategy and Action Plan, the Federal Aboriginal Water Entitlement Program – strategic purchasing framework and the Specific Purpose Access licences as written into NSW Water Sharing Plans.

Floodplain Harvesting measurement and monitoring

Since the licencing of Floodplain Harvesting in August 2022, the GVIA have been working to address the significant issues associated with the implementation of the NSW Floodplain Harvesting Measurement Policy. We have made some small improvements, but there remain numerous issues which are making the transition to compliance difficult for some members.

Review of Water Sharing Plans and development of Water Resource Plans

The review of Water Sharing Plans in the Gwydir Valley is ongoing and the GVIA is working to provide advice and feedback on possible changes on behalf of the industry. Our involvement is essential to ensure the continuation of access arrangements that allow our industry certainty and that there are no third-party impacts associated with any changes.

Community and Government Engagement with Irrigation Industry

We are acutely aware of the public's negative perceptions of the irrigation industry. We continue to work with NIC, NSWIC and other Northern NSW irrigation groups to promote and communicate the value of irrigated agriculture to the community and economy, whilst also re-building support for the water management framework that protects the rights of NSW irrigators and water users.

We believe that consumers need to be reconnected with the agricultural sector to promote our social licence to continue to operate. We are proud what you do as irrigators, we need to get better at communicating that to a broader audience to influence better outcomes.