Environmental Water Knowledge and Research

Communications and Adoption Plan

Collaborate   Investigate   Apply

'When you need to innovate you need to collaborate[1]

Australia is leading the world by allocating water for the wetlands, floodplains and rivers that sustain our communities, both ecological and human. We want to ensure that this water is used wisely so that our riverine environments can flourish and thrive, along with the communities that care about them. To do this, the Murray-Darling Basin Environmental Water Knowledge and Research (MDB EWKR) Project will **collaborate** with water managers to **investigate** the uncertainties around how best to use environmental water, and **apply** this knowledge to real-life decision making.

The aim of this Communications and Adoption Plan is to share and promote the project's purpose, objectives, activities and achievements in an effective, consistent and coordinated manner. It provides a framework to manage and coordinate the variety of communications and adoption approaches that will be used during the project to share key messages and reach target audiences.

Purpose:

The purpose of the MDB EWKR Project is to provide the best science information available to support the evolving needs of environmental water managers, within an adaptive management framework in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Objectives:

The objectives of research undertaken through MDB EWKR are to improve the understanding of how environmental flow management influences ecosystem function and thereby sustains biodiversity. This understanding will enable complementary water and natural resource management actions to enhance the outcomes of environmental water management for ecological and human communities throughout the Murray-Darling Basin.

Key Messages:

The Murray-Darling Basin Environmental Water Knowledge and Research project will **collaborate** with water managers to **investigate** the uncertainties around how best to use environmental water, and **apply** this knowledge to real-life decision making.

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[1] Quote attributed to Marissa Mayer (Yahoo CEO)

Collaborate –with environmental water managers by listening and working to ensure their needs are understood, and that research focuses on addressing their needs.

Collaborate – with freshwater scientists to ensure that the knowledge generated is the best available and relevant.

Investigate – explore, test and analyse priority environmental water management issues through rigorous peer-reviewed science.

Apply – consult, seek input and adapt scientific findings to the realities of environmental water management through open dialogue with water managers.

Target Audiences:

The MDB EWKR project is a collaboration between environmental water managers, scientists and practitioners working in the Murray-Darling Basin.   Figure 1 shows the three target audiences that will be used to focus communication and adoption efforts.

The primary audience for MDB EWKR are Environmental Water Managers, shown here as the central 'pillar' for the communications effort. This group will be collaborating with MDB EWKR to investigate issues of relevance to them so that they can apply new information and knowledge to their environmental watering practices. Communications with the identified 'broad audience' pillar will be important in raising awareness about environmental watering and sharing new knowledge. The final pillar focuses on the 'internal audience', and communication in this pillar is part of the day-to-day business of MDB EWKR.

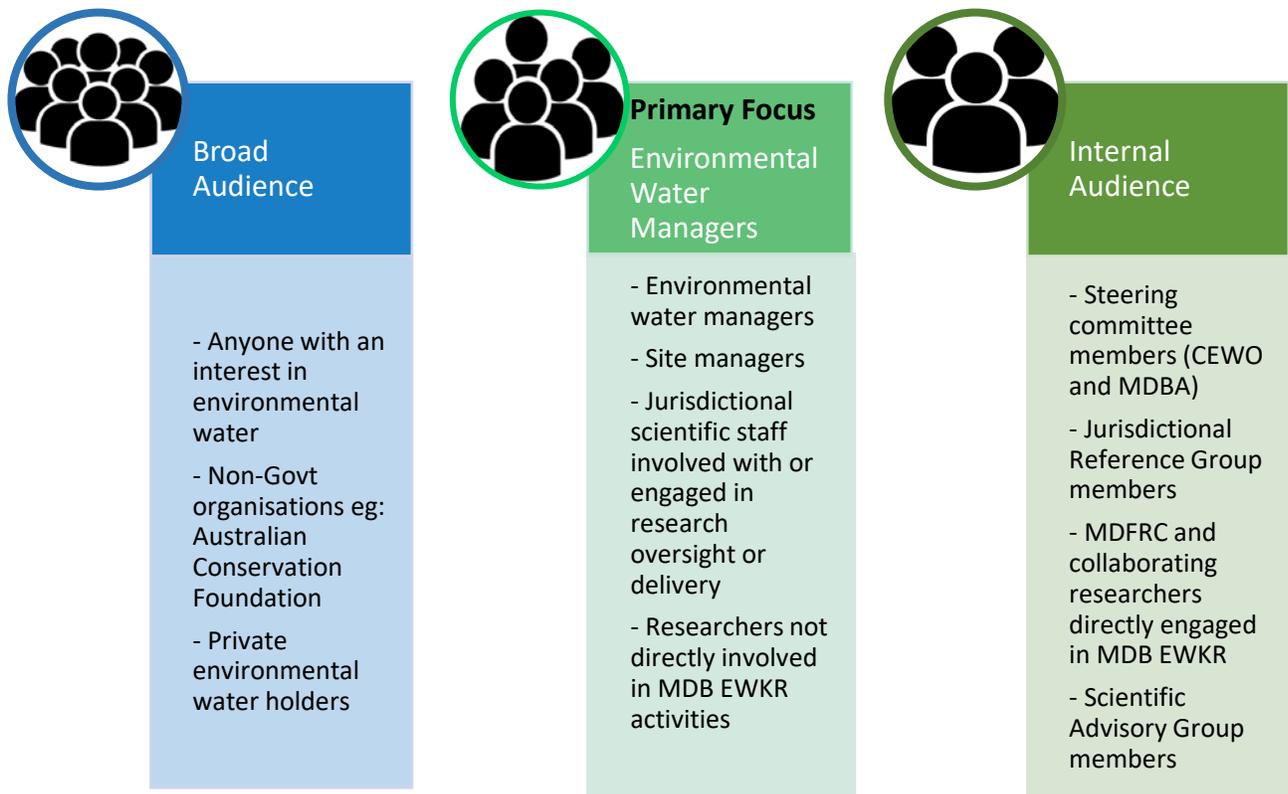| Broad Audience	Primary Focus Environmental Water Managers	Internal Audience
- Anyone with an interest in environmental water - Non-Govt organisations eg: Australian Conservation Foundation - Private environmental water holders	- Environmental water managers - Site managers - Jurisdictional scientific staff involved with or engaged in research oversight or delivery - Researchers not directly involved in MDB EWKR activities	- Steering committee members (CEWO and MDBA) - Jurisdictional Reference Group members - MDFRC and collaborating researchers directly engaged in MDB EWKR - Scientific Advisory Group members

Figure 1: MDB EWKR Target Audiences

Due to the diverse target audience, MDB EWKR is required to develop products that encompass broad, high level interpreted information about the work being undertaken, through to more specific outputs designed for a particular group of people or location.

In order to meet these broad requirements, a hierarchy of 'nested' products and events will be incorporated, ranging from broad, overarching messages in easily accessible formats, through to specific and detailed knowledge.   As the level of specificity increases, the more focused the communication product or adoption approach will be to meet the particular needs of the target audience.

Options available for individuals to access MDB EWKR work, whether they be an environmental water manager, a researcher or a community member are shown in Figure 2. There is movement between and within the elements in the diagram, with no-one locked into accessing information from one communication or adoption channel.   For example, at a high level, the storytelling platform and social media promote key messages and achievements. More accessible detail will be provided through fact sheets, synthesis guides and focused workshops. Highly technical knowledge will be used to inform environmental watering decisions through focused collaboration at a theme and/or site level.
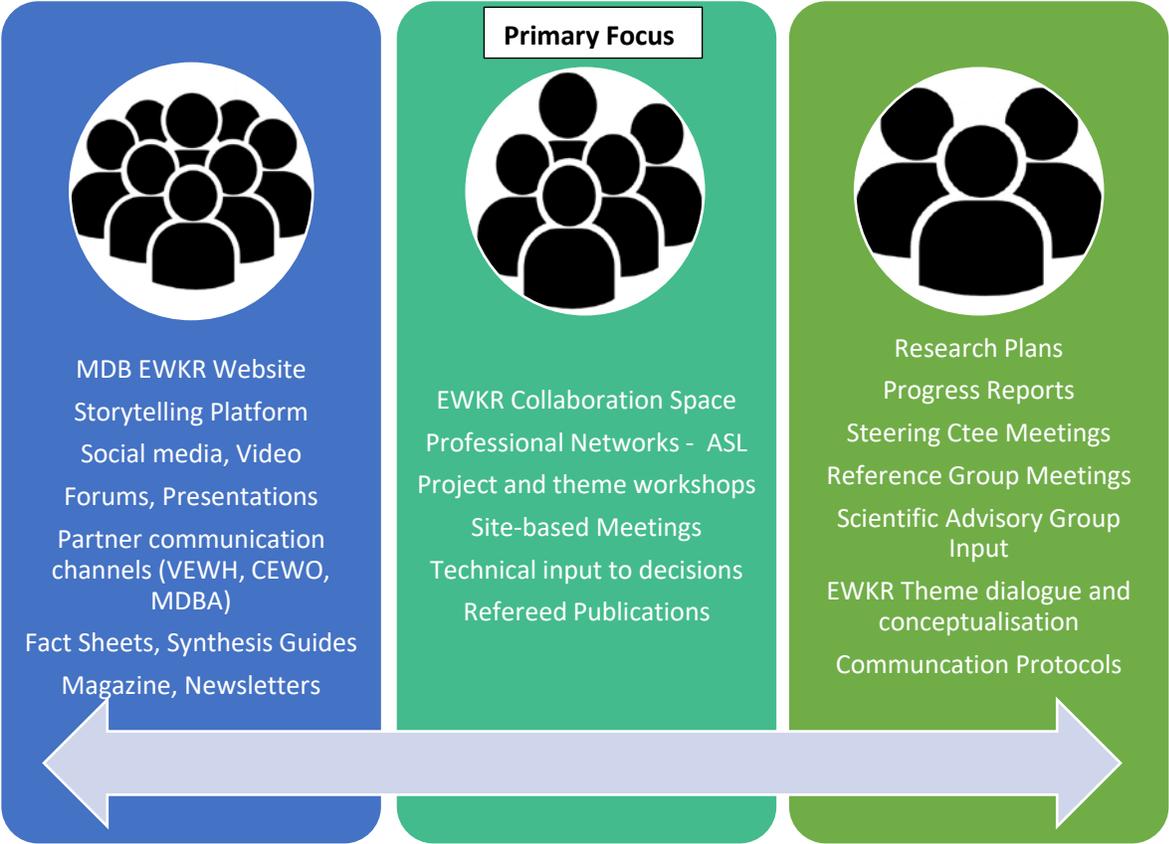
Primary Focus

MDB EWKR Website
Storytelling Platform
Social media, Video
Forums, Presentations
Partner communication channels (VEWH, CEWO, MDBA)
Fact Sheets, Synthesis Guides
Magazine, Newsletters

EWKR Collaboration Space
Professional Networks - ASL
Project and theme workshops
Site-based Meetings
Technical input to decisions
Refereed Publications

Research Plans
Progress Reports
Steering Ctee Meetings
Reference Group Meetings
Scientific Advisory Group Input
EWKR Theme dialogue and conceptualisation
Communcation Protocols

Figure 2: MDB EWKR Communication and Adoption Channels

Description of Communication and Adoption Channels:

Broad Audience Strategies

MDB EWKR Website

The MDB EWKR website (www.mdfrc.org.au/projects/ewkr/) is a central location for project information and will be a first point of contact for people with an interest in the project. It will provide an overview of the project, its purpose, objectives, activities and outputs. It will also provide portals to both general information about environmental flows e.g. MDB EWKR Storytelling Platform, as well as the best available science on the influence of flow on ecosystem condition.

MDB EWKR Storytelling Platform

The Storytelling Platform will be a website linked to the main MDB EWKR Website that will have highly visual stories in plain English. An example of what the Storytelling Platform could look like is www.riproc.com.au. These stories will be used across many other communication products including social media and partner websites, such as the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Victorian Environmental Water Holder. The stories can also be used in magazines like RipRap or partner publications. The storytelling platform will enable communication to be dynamic, as it is easy to update as new stories are written.

Social Media, Video (You Tube)

The content provided through the Storytelling Platform, the MDB EWKR Collaborative Space and general activities underway across the MBD EWKR Research Team, will be used on the MDFRC Facebook account. Social media content can be scheduled so that MDB EWKR will 'post' once or twice a fortnight, yet the effort required to organise these posts can happen monthly. In addition, a MDB EWKR You Tube channel will feature video snippets from researchers out in the field, for example, waterbird tracking, sampling zooplankton, or a local forum where MDB EWKR researchers and practitioners are sharing results.

Other websites and platforms

Stories and content generated across MDB EWKR may also be shared on other related websites such as Finterest, Riverspace, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Victorian Environmental Water Holder, and partner websites. The underlying principle for all MDB EWKR communications is that one story is used multiple times, and on as many platforms as possible to extend reach and cater to a wide range of audiences.

Conferences and Forums

Presentations will be undertaken at relevant conferences at the National and Regional scale, reflecting the geographic location of the projects target audience. The River Symposium (2017 & 2019) may be used as an opportunity for the project to share research outcomes with water managers and the scientific community.

MDB EWKR personnel will also be encouraged to share their findings at discipline specific conferences wherever possible. In 2018, the Australian Stream Management Conference presents opportunity for MDB EWKR to sponsor the event and host a workshop or field trip associated with work accomplished to date.

RipRap Magazine or equivalent

MDB EWKR may consider sponsoring a RipRap around a relevant theme and contribute a number of articles. The magazine format is highly visual, provides an easy to access reference guide to a range of projects and contact people, is easy to read and already has distribution across NRM and 'watery' networks. The production of an attractive magazine will also be used to share findings with partners and local communities. The synergy between the magazine and social media can also be used to share each story as a stand-alone item and direct people to either the Storytelling Platform or other relevant websites.

Partner media channels and networks

Using existing networks to share findings is an important part of the MDB EWKR communications approach. Material provided through the Storytelling Platform and EWKR Collaborative Space can be adapted and tailored to 'fit' in a Commonwealth Environmental Water Office or Office of Environment and Heritage publication or e-newsletter. Other possible newsletters are the Australian River Restoration Centre, Wetland Update, Fish Habitat Network, Australian Society of Fish Biology, River Basin Management Society and Australian Society of Limnology.

Primary Audience Strategies

As was noted in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the primary target audience for MDB EWKR is environmental water managers. It is for this reason that more emphasis and effort will be placed on adoption, than broader communication, with these three approaches guiding interactions between the MDB EWKR team and environmental water managers.

1. Collaborate with managers to achieve their objectives – this will require flexible, adaptive approaches in which researchers consider opportunities and collaborate to develop outputs.

2. Capitalise on existing networks to deliver knowledge when managers need it – this will also require a flexible, adaptive approach in which researchers are given clear objectives and have support to communicate, interact and develop their networks within the environmental water manager professional community.

3. Engage with managers to determine how project outputs are customised to meet their needs – this will require an ongoing process of engagement between managers and projects to ensure meaningful environmental water management outcomes are achieved.

Using these three approaches, the following adoption strategies will be used to focus attention and tailor outputs for environmental water managers.

EWKR Collaboration Space

The MDB EWKR Collaboration Space will be used to broadcast project information, generally on a fortnightly basis to subscribers. It will also support internal communication and integration among research collaborators, as well as being a repository for research plans, shared documents, data and models. It can also be used to engage water managers in the development of outputs, as well as being a forum to discuss managers' knowledge needs.

Professional Networks

Each researcher and practitioner involved in MDB EWKR brings with them a network. As MDB EWKR develops a portfolio of stories, those involved in the project will be encouraged to adapt and tailor stories so they 'fit' within their networks. Research Gate might be another platform MDB EWKR personnel can use to share

Project and theme workshops and meetings

MDB EWKR workshops and meetings will facilitate ongoing engagement with participating managers and researchers. These meetings will test ideas, and ensure research is able to be applied in 'real-life' situations. In addition, MDB EWKR will use pre-existing professional network meetings and workshops as engagement and information sharing opportunities.

The MDB EWKR Annual Research Forum will be a way of sharing the activities and results of work undertaken through the project firstly amongst the researchers (days 1 and 2) and secondly with environmental water managers and practitioners (days 3 and 4).

Snapshot Factsheets and Synthesis Guides

Fact Sheets will be used to provide an easy to understand overview of what is known about a particular environmental water management issue identified by stakeholders as important to them. These Fact Sheets will be free to download and may also be produced in hard copy for distribution at workshops and events. More detailed Synthesis Guides will be developed to bring together research and practice at a more technical level than the Fact Sheets. These Guides will be longer, and may be on topics such as: the 'role of large floods in ecosystem functioning' or 'how to manage trade-offs when managing water for the environment'. As with the Fact Sheets, the Synthesis Guides will be developed around topics identified by environmental water managers and focus on science informing practice.

Refereed Publications

It is anticipated that all project activities will lead to a published output and, for quality assurance purposes, the preferred option is that the outputs will be peer reviewed and published in the scientific literature. In some instances, this may limit managers' access to the information, which is not desirable. Where a journal's publication policy limits capacity to make the paper available, the project will produce a Fact Sheet that summarises the findings in an accessible and easy to apply way.

Internal Audience Strategies

Research Plans and Progress Reports

The Annual Research Plan, Multi-Year Research Plan and Progress Reports represent the foundational internal communication outputs for the project. Reports will contain detailed descriptions of progress toward achieving project objectives and, in particular, the implementation of the activities described in the Annual Research Plan. This information will be generated by collaborating researchers, synthesised by Theme Coordinators, and compiled by the Project Leadership. These documents will be 'touchstone' documents for the project and all partners.

In addition to the Plans are Communication and Adoption Protocols that will guide activities and be a point of reference for all MDB EWKR personnel and partners. (see Appendix 1)

Project Steering Group, Jurisdictional Reference Group and Scientific Advisory Group

Meetings between the Project Steering Group and Jurisdictional Reference Group will be convened to guide the MDB EWKR Project and ensure ongoing, regular review of activities and progress against objectives. The focus for these meetings will be on having an open, constructive dialogue to enhance and further the success of MDB EWKR activities.

The Science Advisory Group will provide strategic advice on the scientific focus and science delivery of the project and will help to facilitate and improve project outcomes.

EWKR Theme Dialogue and Conceptualisation

Internal communication within and between the MDB EWKR Themes will support effective project management, coordination and collaboration, as well as ensuring researchers are focused on stakeholder needs. Cross-theme meetings will be used to identify complementary benefits across research work, as well as opportunities to coordinate activities such as stakeholder meetings and data collection. Regular meetings between Theme teams will also be important in identifying stories, planning forums and developing content for Fact Sheets and Synthesis Guides.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The MDB EWKR Project leadership will be responsible for project wide communication, as well as the coordination of communication products and activities relevant to the Research Themes. The Project leadership will manage content derived from the Themes and adapt it for use across identified communication and adoption channels.

The MDB EWKR Project leadership will also be responsible for ensuring communication protocols are applied across all Theme areas.

Theme Coordinators will be responsible for Research Theme related communication with project participants, as well as providing clear guidance for the coordination of activities on their Theme work components. Liaison with environmental water managers on specific sites relevant to research is also the responsibility of Theme coordinators.

Every three months Theme Coordinators will develop content such as a story, photos, social media posts, videos and workshop outcomes for use by the Project leadership in broader communications activities. The quality of this content is critical for communication and adoption to be effective.

Theme researchers will have responsibility for contributing content with regard to their specific site and area of work, and will support overall Theme and project communication. Researchers will also have a role in promoting awareness of Project outputs through their networks.

Steering Committee members will be responsible for reviewing progress and providing timely, constructive feedback to the MDB EWKR team to ensure project objectives are met and outcomes achieved.

Project Evaluation:

The MDB EWKR Project Evaluation Strategy sets out communications and adoption questions to be answered about the approaches outlined in this document, and these will be addressed as part of MDB EWKR-wide review processes. Ongoing review of communication and adoption approaches will use the following measures to assess progress:

- Website analytics for MDB EWKR website and Storytelling Platform showing visitation, traffic, downloads, social media shares on Facebook.

- Social media analytics showing likes, shares, referral to websites, direct and organic reach.

- MDB EWKR Collaboration Space analytics showing visitation, use and questions posted by participants.

- Attendance at workshops, forums and meetings. Post-event surveys to gain feedback, including quantitative and qualitative measures.

- Downloads and distribution of Fact Sheets and Synthesis Guides.

- Requests for more information and presentations to relevant groups by stakeholders to MDB EWKR Team members.

- Narrative capture through meetings, forums and workshops where video, audio or transcription is used to record participant feedback and experience.

Theme coordinators will be responsible for gathering this data as it relates to their activities. The Project leadership will be responsible for synthesising this data across all Themes and interpreting it for project Progress Reports.

Plan Snapshot:

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Collaborate   Investigate   Apply

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The Murray-Darling Basin Environmental Water Knowledge and Research project will **collaborate** with water managers to **investigate** the uncertainties around how best to use environmental water, and **apply** this knowledge to real-life decision making.

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Stakeholder focused communication and adoption effort

Clear, engaging, attractive and inspirational content

Hierarchy of channels for a variety of target audiences

Create once, use multiple times

Review, adapt, tailor and celebrate

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Workplan April 2017- April 2018:

April	
Submit abstracts for River Symposium (Brisbane) to DoEE to approve and forward to conference organisers by 28th – Fish, Food Webs and Waterbirds	Project manager (PM) and Project leader (PL) to contact Theme coordinators re: preparing and submitting abstracts
'Open call-out' to JRG for topics for PL to present to water managers	DoEE to send call out and responses to PL
Start to restructure webpage to accommodate information to be uploaded.	PL
Initiate 'EWKR overview', and Food Web and Fish videos based on Ovens River work (3 to 4 videos)	PM and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media	PM and Theme coordinators
May	
Take three Collaboration Space stories previously uploaded and share on Riverspace	PM, Riverspace
Start development of Storyspace website.	TBA
Prepare two Synthesis Guides – could include piggybacking on natural flows, benefits of wetting and drying, role of large floods	PL
Talk to water managers following 'call out', identify Fact Sheet topics and Frequently Asked Questions (only develop if required, Synthesis Guides might be chosen instead)	PL, theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
Write 8 RipRap articles ready for submission by 29th − Synthesis guides to form basis for 2-3 articles − Theme of RipRap to be prepared by PL − 4 articles from each of Theme coordinators	PL and Theme coordinators
Film 'EWKR overview' and Food Web and Fish videos (3 to 4 videos)	PL, PM and Theme coordinators

(Research plans finalised for each Theme and Project plan updated)	(PL, PM and Theme coordinators)
EWKR story for MDFRC Newsletter	PL and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media	PM and Theme coordinators
June	
Submit abstracts for Australian Society for Limnology (Brisbane) to DoEE to approve and forward to conference organisers by 8th	PL and Theme coordinators
'EWKR overview' and Food Web and Fish videos complete (3 to 4 videos). Share on Storyspace, MDB EWKR Collaboration Space and via social media	PL, PM and Theme coordinators
Storyspace website developed – upload mix of stories from Collaboration space, Food Web and Fish videos	TBA
Review RipRap articles and make final approvals	PL and PM
Talk to water managers following 'call out', identify Fact Sheet topics and Frequently Asked Questions (only develop if required, Synthesis Guides might be chosen instead)	PL
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM, Theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
July	
Australian Society for Limnology and River symposium papers and presentations prepared – seek DoEE approval	PL and Theme leaders
Update with new stories and images on MDB EWKR website and Riverspace	PM, Riverspace
Upload new EWKR webpage structure and populate	PM
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM, Theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
August	
(Annual Progress Report finalised)	(PM, PL and Theme coordinators)
RipRap released and promoted	ARRC
Stories from RipRap uploaded to EWKR Storyspace for social media sharing over next four months	TBA
Initiate 'EWKR update' and fieldwork videos for Vegetation and Waterbird themes (3 to 4 videos).	PM, PL and Theme coordinators

Consult with environmental water managers about topics for adoption workshops	PL and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM, Theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
September – December (Field season)	
ASL and River Symposium	PL and Theme coordinators
5-6 adoption workshops with jurisdictions to share EWKR findings and tailor to meet their needs. Also use adoption workshop to evaluate outcomes and relevance of EWKR to 'real life' environmental water management issues.	PL, PM and Theme coordinators
Update with new stories and images MDB EWKR website and Riverspace.	PM, PL and Theme coordinators, Riverspace
Film and edit field videos for 'EWKR update' and Vegetation and Waterbird themes. Share on Storyspace, MDB EWKR Collaboration Space and via social media.	PL, PM and Theme coordinators
12 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM, Theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
January	
Plan for MDB EWKR Annual Research Forum – opportunity for researchers and practitioners to collaborate, share knowledge and test new ideas and approaches	PL, PM and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM, Theme coordinators and MDFRC technicians
February	
(Mid-year progress report finalised)	(PM, PL and Theme coordinators)
MDB EWKR Annual Research Forum – opportunity for researchers and practitioners to collaborate, share knowledge and test new ideas and approaches	PL, PM and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM and Theme coordinators
March	

Prepare and submit a story for CEWO Wetlands Australia magazine	PL and Theme coordinators
3 new stories on Collaboration Space and shared via social media and Storyspace	PM and Theme coordinators
Planning for communication and adoption based on activities over preceding year	PL and PM Theme coordinators
Ongoing	

Opportunistic engagement will be undertaken over the twelve month period and include workshops, conversations with managers, interaction with Jurisdictional Representative Group etc. A record will be kept of these interactions, for example:
 	
   – NECMA: steering committee for the 'Our Catchment Our Communities Lower Ovens' project 4th April, AP
   – Presentation to the TriState Alliance Fish Forum (26- 27 April, AP.
   – Presentation at Rivers of Carbon: Breadalbane Biodiversity Linkages. HM
   – Film from Rivers of Carbon presentation shared via social media, ARRC and MDB EWKR. HM
	PL and Theme coordinators

Outputs:

- MDB EWKR website with photos and links to MDB EWKR Storyspace

- MDB EWKR Storyspace

- MDB EWKR Collaboration Space

- Monthly update of EWKR Collaboration Space and social media with 3 stories

- RipRap Magazine Edition Environmental Watering RipRap featuring 6-7 EWKR stories

- RipRap stories shared on Riverspace, Storyspace, MDB EWKR Collaboration Space and via social media

- CEWO Wetlands Australia Magazine – 1 story

- 2 Synthesis Guides on topics relevant to environmental water management

- ? Fact Sheets on topics identified by environmental water managers

- ? Frequently Asked Questions about environmental watering shared via web, social media

- Conference presentations at Riversymposium and Australian Society of Limnology

  5-6 Jurisdictional Adoption workshops

- 6 to 8 short (ie 2min) videos developed focusing on environmental watering topics and showcasing work from four themes

- MDB EWKR Annual Research Forum

- Opportunistic engagement by team when invitations arise