

Independent Review into the February-March 2023 fish deaths in the Darling-Baaka River, Menindee

Process and Timeframe

The NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer (CSE) has been requested to undertake an independent review into the February-March fish death event in the Darling-Baaka River at Menindee.

As part of the Review, the CSE will appoint an expert advisory panel to assist in this work. The CSE will also appoint and consult with a community advisory body, which will include representation from First Nations and the local community.

The CSE will present the Final Report, with any recommendations, to Government by 31 August 2023. The report and any recommendations would be made publicly available on the Office of the Chief Scientist & Engineer website.

Terms of Reference

In undertaking the Review, the CSE will consider:

1. Likely cause/s of the fish death event, including
 - a. Environmental conditions in the lead up to the event
 - b. Assessment of relevant monitoring data, including water data, to assist with determining likely causes
 - c. Management and sufficiency of water flow at the time of the event
2. Response to the fish death event, including:
 - a. Role of the different agencies/departments when responding to the event
 - b. Action taken by agencies/departments (including public health response) and others when responding to the event
 - c. Role of the State Emergency Management Framework for responding to the event
 - d. Communication with the community during the event, including consultation with First Nations people and organisations
3. Recommendations should consider:
 - a. Monitoring data and other information that can assist with predicting and responding to fish death events
 - b. Appropriateness of the response during the event and potential steps/action that could be taken to enhance the effectiveness of future responses (including preparedness, training, communication and collaboration across groups)
 - c. Appropriateness of the State Emergency Management Framework to respond to the event
 - d. Local or other interventions that should be considered to mitigate or avoid future events
 - e. Any other matters that the Chief Scientist & Engineer considers relevant