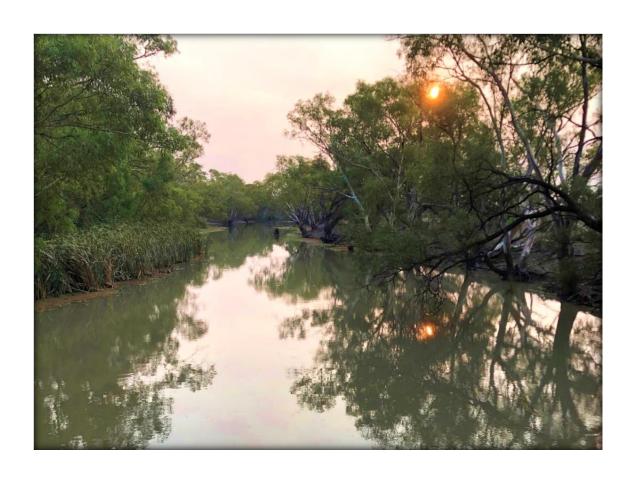


IPART Submission



Yanco Creek System Levy 2025-2030

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Submission for the continuation of the YCS Levy 2025-2030

YCS Levy

AGM 2024 Motion:

That the YCS Levy (charged through WaterNSW) remain at the 2005/6 rate of \$.90 per ML of entitlement as a base rate and to account for CPI (inflation), the base rate be increased by 4% each year.

Moved: Colin McCrabb Seconded: Bob Crawford Carried

YACTAC Budget 2025-2030	
Account Name	Annual Budget
Income	
YACTAC membership	\$60,000
Interest Income	\$10,000
Grants - projects	\$120,000
Consulting	\$8,000
YCS Levies	\$100,000
Total Annual Income Budget	\$298,000
Expenses	
Advocacy & agency meetings	\$70,000
Aboriginal collaboration	\$1,500
Accounting, Auditor & Xero	\$6,000
Administration & Bookkeeping IT	\$33,500
Advertising	\$1,500
Field work	\$30,000
Fish/Frog/Platypus/Bird Survey	\$40,000
Insurance	\$6,500
Memberships	\$10,000
Project work	\$120,000
Travel	\$8,500
Weeds	\$35,000
WHS	\$2,500
Total Annual Expenses Budget	\$365,000
Total Loss (to be funded by consolidated revenue)	-\$67,000

The YCS levy is landholder led and has been supported since 2005. Over time the total revenue raised from the levy has been significantly impacted by water buy backs to the federal government. In its first year the levy raised \$160,000 however in the 2023-24 year only \$93,500 was raised. During the last IPART determination it was proposed to increase the \$0.90c per ML levy to catch up on CPI increases but that was rejected. Landholders rallied as a result and moved a motion to increase the membership fee of YACTAC to \$1000 (incl GST) per landholder, which demonstrated the level of support from members.

Of the 82 membership invoices issued 69 landholders voluntarily paid in 2022-23 and 67 in 2023-24, which signifies the level of importance held by landholders.

There are 289 licences which attract the YCS Levy with 126 having a licence volume of under 20ML, which is deemed non-commercial. Of the remaining licences many are held under the same ownership, which is why only 82 invoices are issued to commercial irrigators for membership of YACTAC.

The YCS Levy provides funding for four key objectives:

- Maintaining and improving a system of reliable water delivery.
- Reduce stream flow impediments.
- Maintaining the Yanco Creek and system to enhance the riparian and ecological health of the system.
- Developing community ownership, participation and empowerment for managing the system's natural resources.

WaterNSW manages water flow at various infrastructure points but not between these points. The Yanco Creek System is a slow-moving creek system, over 600kms in length (it was 800kms long but 200kms of the Forest Creek was shut off under the Water for Rivers project). Water infrastructure points (weirs/regulators etc), some owned by WaterNSW and others privately, regulate water flow throughout the system. However, water flow can also be influenced by obstructions such as weeds and trees falling into the creek, as well as drought. In the early 2000s the creek system had willows that grew across the creek, from one bank to the other, which almost stopped flow in several reaches. The YCS Levy expenditure resulted in a 95% reduction in willows across the entire Yanco Creek System.

Over time the focus shifted from predominately willow removal to encompass more extensive environmental and community outcomes, in keeping with the key objectives. This can be shown in the many agencies YACTAC is involved in and the increase in the number of environmental and monitoring activities. The wetlands within the YCS now form part of the mid-Murrumbidgee wetland complex and are monitored under the FLOW MER program via Charles Sturt University (CSU).

In the last determination period, the YCS Levy was used for many projects:

- Annual whole of system weed identification
 - Aquatic and noxious weed control in the Yanco, Colombo, Billabong and Forest creeks
- Fish surveys in the Yanco-Billabong Creek System 2024 Charles Sturt Uni
- Platypus in the YCS understanding distribution and population status
- Employment of part time Project Officer.

Project highlights 2022-2023

1. Willow Removal and Revegetation

- Removed 200 metres of invasive willows along Colombo Creek.
- Hosted a planting event with Coleambally Central School to revegetate the cleared area, restoring native vegetation.

2. African Boxthorn Biocontrol Pilot

• Conducted a workshop on trialling newly released, by CSIRO, rust fungus (*Puccinia rapipes*) for long-term control of African boxthorn along the creeks.

3. Wetlands for Wildlife Project

- Enhanced habitat for EPBC Vulnerable listed Southern bell frog (Litoria raniformis).
- Planted 3,500+ seedlings and conducted direct seeding around backwater of Yanco Creek.
- Created frog basking sites with rocks and conducted in-stream planting.
- Partnered with Coleambally Central School for hands-on planting activities.

4. Educational Workshops for Native Vegetation

- Engaged Conargo Public School in seed collection, propagation, and planting of uncommon species such as yellow ruby saltbush (*Enchylaena tomentosa*).
- Distributed tubestock to the community to enhance local biodiversity.

5. Waterway Management Planning

- Through Refreshing Rivers Program developed Central Billabong Waterway Management Plan.
- Consulted with the community and collaborated with Murray LLS and Griffith University through the Refreshing Rivers Program.

6. Colombo Creek Fish Habitat Project

- Removed 900kg of carp from 10km of creek to reduce competition with breeding native species such as the threatened and NSW listed Endangered Population of eeltailed catfish (*Tandanus tandanus*).
- Organised carp control presentations and educational sessions.
- 27 ha fenced and revegetated, 3.3km of creek line protected and two properties involved to improve water quality and habitat.

7. Landholder and Stakeholder Engagement

 Worked with landholders and key stakeholders to implement best management practices for the health of the Yanco Creek System.

Project highlights 2023-2024

1. Carp removal

- 470kg carp removal from the Billabong Creek.
- Electro-fished 5km of Billabong Creek in Dept and Dec 2023.
- 70% 85% biomass is carp.

2. Golden Perch released

- 27,000 perch fingerlings released in the Billabong Creek in Jan 2024.
- Other release sites including Billabong Creek at Wanganella and Jerilderie and Colombo Creek.

3. Eel-tailed catfish released

- 400 eel-tailed fingerlings released in Jerilderie and Conargo, April 2024.
- Considered NSW Endangered Population due to decline Murray Darling Basin.
- YACTAC funded all fingerlings.

4. Community events and workshops

- 12+ events hosted or supported by YACTAC.
- 300+ community attendees.
- Events held at Moulamein, Wanganella, Conargo, Jerilderie and Morundah.

5. Replanting waterways

- 300m of Billabong Creek instream planting.
- Riparian planting, Conargo TSR.

6. Landholder and Stakeholder Engagement

• Worked with landholders and key stakeholders to implement best management practices for the health of the Yanco Creek System.

The YCS Levy also co-funded the following:

- Refreshing Rivers Program partner
 - The RRP is a collaboration between government, industry, research and community organizations, led by Local Land Services
 - o 10 year project commenced in 2021
- Biocontrol implementation of sagittaria using the fruit-feeding weevil
- Murrumbidgee Flow Monitoring, Evaluation and Research program partner
- Collaboration and assistance to the local indigenous community to form the Jeithi Jerilderie Aboriginal Corporation
- Annual whole of system aquatic weed control program fully funded.

Quarterly newsletters are produced and demonstrate activities, achievements and relevant information to members. They are available on the YACTAC website:

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/news-listing/

YACTAC Budget v Actual 2024/25 (*as at 28 Feb)					
	Annual			Committed	
Account Name	Budget	YTD Actual *	Remaining income/exp		
Income					
2024/25 Membership – commercial irrigators	\$60,000	\$58,181	\$1,819		
Interest Income	\$10,000	\$1,945	\$8,055	\$10,971	
Grants RRM + CitS + Other	\$120,000	\$98,691	\$21,309		
Consulting	\$5,000	\$3,750	\$1,250		
YCS Levies - incl outstanding 2021-23	\$100,000	\$101,867	-\$1,867		
Total Income	\$295,000	\$264,434	\$30,566	\$19,595	
Expenses					
Advocacy & agency meetings	\$70,000	\$36,772	\$33,228		
Aboriginal collaboration	\$1,500	\$2,025	-\$525		
Accounting, Auditor & Xero	\$6,000	\$3,807	\$2,193		
Administration & Bookkeeping IT	\$33,500	\$21,584	\$11,916		
Advertising	\$1,500	\$265	\$1,235		
Field work	\$30,000	\$22,640	\$7,360		
Fish/Frog/Platypus/Bird Survey	\$40,000	\$32,400	\$7,600		
Insurance	\$6,000	\$2,904	\$3,096		
Memberships	\$10,000	\$5,035	\$4,965		
Project work - RRM + CitS + Sag + Other	\$120,000	\$64,362	\$55,638	\$7,500	
Travel	\$7,500	\$3,726	\$3,774		
Weeds	\$30,000	\$23,000	\$7,000		
WHS	\$2,000		\$2,000		
Total Expenses	\$358,000	\$218,520	\$139,480	\$131,980	
Total P/L	-\$63,000	\$45,914			

NOTE: Grants In-Kind income and expenditure not recorded as it is book entry only

The organisation is run on a very lean budget with only two part time employees and a bookkeeper. YACTAC is committed to supporting local environmental, community and indigenous initiatives whilst also ensuring the flow in the YCS continues.

A survey was undertaken of YACTAC members to gain an understanding of the profile of the organisation in the local community, whether members would support the continuation of the YCS Levy and at what rate that levy should be set at for the 2025-2030 period. The results are shown on the following pages with the survey questions in Appendix 1.



PO Box 53 HOWLONG NSW 2643

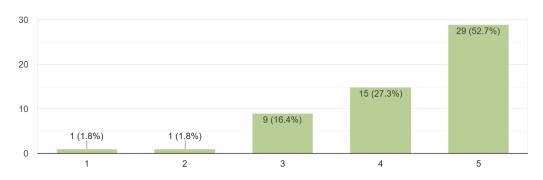
B I U © X

The Yanco Creek System Levy has been in place since 2005 and the charge has not altered. A review is being undertaken to gain feedback on your opinion and suggestions. The YACTAC Board encourages you to complete this questionnaire. Thank you.

Survey Responses

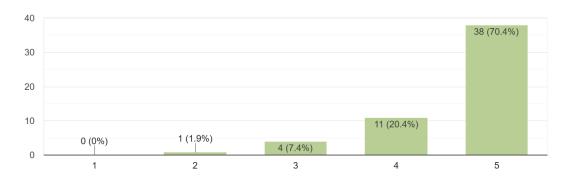
Please rate your knowledge of YACTAC activities.

55 responses

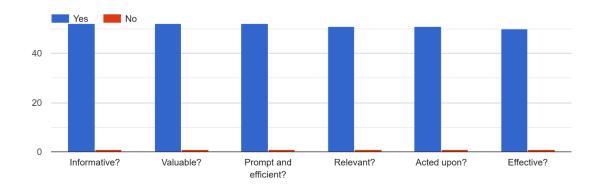


Please rate your confidence in YACTAC to undertake works and activities on the Yanco Creek System.

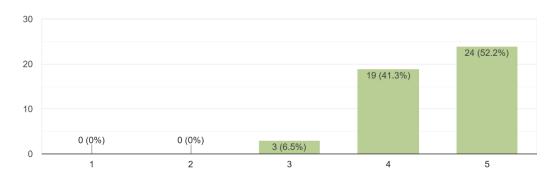
54 responses



Have your interactions with YACTAC been:

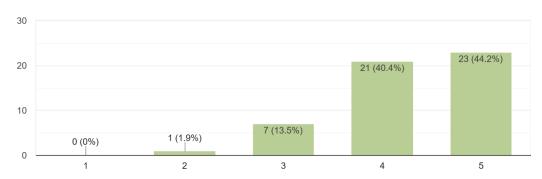


How would you rate YACTAC's ability to represent you? 46 responses



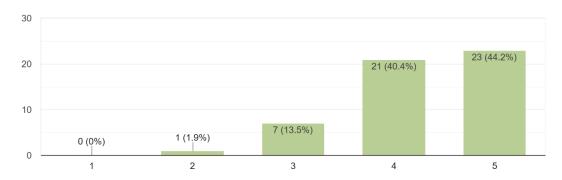
How would you rate YACTAC's ability to achieve improved outcomes for the Yanco Creek System's environment?

52 responses



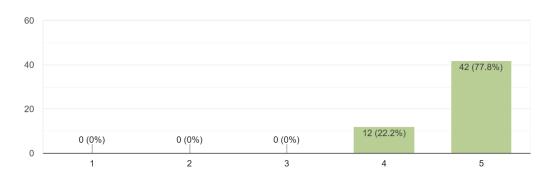
How would you rate YACTAC's ability to achieve improved outcomes for the Yanco Creek System's environment?

52 responses



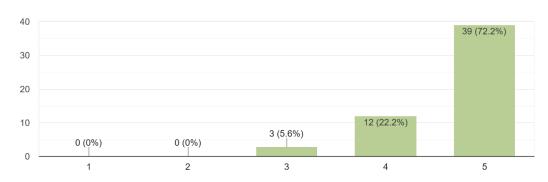
How much do you value YACTAC?

54 responses

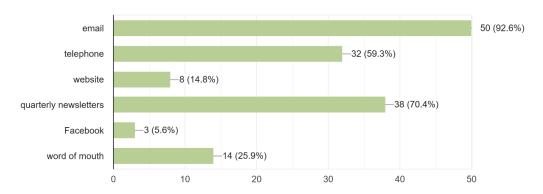


How important is it to you that YACTAC is a member of various stakeholder groups and committees?

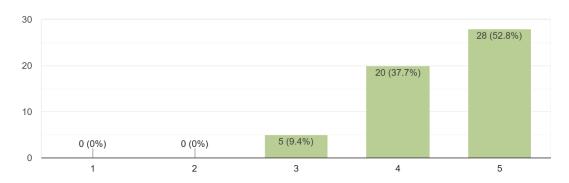
54 responses



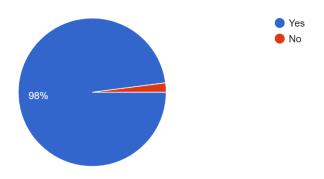
How are you informed of the activities of YACTAC? Tick all that are appropriate. 54 responses



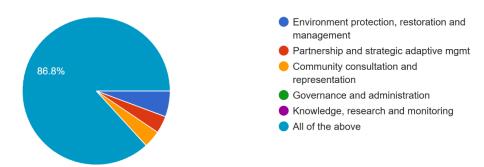
Do you feel it is important that the YCS levy keeps up with inflation? 53 responses



Given the YCS Levy is charged at the initial 2005 rate, are you prepared to increase the rate? ^{49 responses}

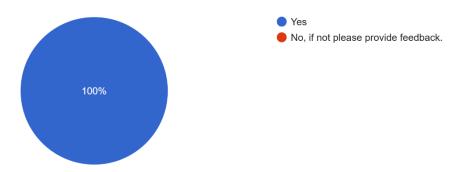


What activities should the YCS Levy be used for? 53 responses

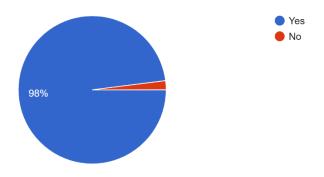


Currently YACTAC seeks funding through an annual membership fee and from many other agencies, including grants. Do you fully support this approach?

52 responses



The YCS Levy is charged on Water Access Licence volumes within the YCS (not including Supplementary Licences). 2025-2030 YCS Levy prop...crease in charge each year by 4%. Do you agree? 50 responses



Any other comments/suggestions?

4 responses

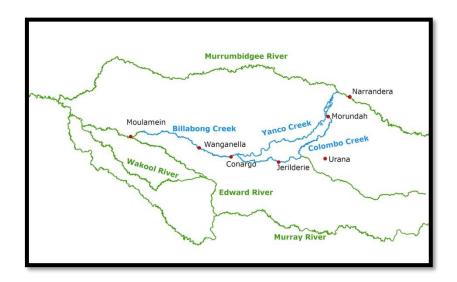
Comment: I feel it is essential that YCS continue its work as the community and irrigators are constantly under "attack" from many different areas of the community. We (irrigators) are seen as environmental vandals whereas we are the opposite, with the amount of funds raised due to the levy, research studies funded and undertaken, plus the on-ground works, all to improve the creek ecosystem.

Comment: They provide an essential service as a conduit between government, irrigators, landholders and community.

Comment: YACYAC is effective and efficient. Excellent value for money in environmental planning, policy and outcomes. A very well regarded and respected organisation.

Comment: It is essential that the levy is collected to represent our communities.

Overwhelmingly the people paying this levy have a desire for it to continue. The Yanco Creek System is highly prized for its warm slow flowing creeks that provide habitat for many native species, some of which are endangered. The location of the system is in an area that could easily be forgotten by state and federal agencies, if YACTAC was not pushing for continued recognition.



The Yanco Creek System (shown in blue) is in the Murrumbidgee Valley.

Background

The Yanco Creek System, located in the Riverina region, in an ecologically significant network of waterways supporting diverse habitats and species, many of which are ecologically significant. YACTAC has been involved in the development of improving the wetland environment for many decades. In the late 1990s the local Catchment Management Authority worked with YACTAC to target regionally significant areas for weed control and improvement in biodiversity. In 2004 The Yanco Creek System Natural Resource Management Plan was developed after significant local consultation and launched by the Hon. Craig Knowles, Minister for Natural Resources. Partners involved in the development were the Dept of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources; State Water; Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators Inc and YACTAC.

The four key objectives of the plan were:

- Maintaining and improving a system of reliable water delivery.
- Reduce stream flow impediments.
- Maintaining the Yanco Creek and system to enhance the riparian and ecological health of the system.
- Developing community ownership, participation and empowerment for managing the system's natural resources.

Landholders along the Yanco Creek System soon realised that to achieve these objectives they would need to financially support the initiatives. With the backing of the landholders the YCS Levy was first approved by IPART in 2006 with funds raised from the pass-through levy to implement the Natural Resource Management Plan and improve flows and provide significant water efficiencies.

A new, more comprehensive, Strategic Plan 2020-2030 was launched by Dr Dale McNeil. This strategic plan sets out YACTAC's vision, focus areas and objectives that build upon the significant work carried out under the previous NRMP. The plan encompasses the floodplains, distributary creeks, anabranches and wetlands that make up the Yanco Creek System.

There are six strategic focus areas:

- Governance and administration
- Community consultation and representation
- Environmental protection, restoration and management
- Water resource management
- Partnerships and strategic adaptive management
- Knowledge, research and monitoring.

YACTAC will continue to drive a program of community based environmental and water resource management that ensures delivery of water in the Yanco Creek System.

YACTAC Strategic Plan 2020-30 Summary

YACTAC vision	The state of the s	present the people of the Yan of our people and protects th	WATER=LIFE			
Strategic value statements	integrity and	YACTAC will engage and empower the YCS community and represent their values, concerns and needs in all environmental and natural resource management activities.	YACTAC will actively protect our wetlands and creek environments from impacts of threatening processes, and lead the restoration of a complex, connected, and resilient natural environment.	YACTAC will faithfully represent the community on important water resource management issues, and will drive negotiations, partnerships, and planning activities in the interests of our environment and socioeconomic values.	YACTAC will work under a framework for strategic adaptive management and work with partner organisations to maintain a process of community and stakeholder driven adaptive management to address threats and strategically restore the environment of the YCS.	YACTAC will be a welcoming and facilitative partner in research that improves our understanding of our natural systems and water resource requirements. It will develop strategic monitoring and assessment programs ensuring high level science-based decision making.
Strategic focus areas	Governance and administration	Community consultation and representation	Environmental protection, restoration and management	Water resources management	Partnerships and strategic adaptive management	Knowledge, research and monitoring
	Financial management and reporting	Member and levy payer engagement	Environmental flows assessment	Water resource development	Stakeholder analysis	Water resources research and knowledge
	Board meetings and directorship	Community values and needs	Species and ecosystem recovery plans	Water for the environment	Water industry partnerships	Biodiversity monitoring and threatened biota assessments
	Strategic planning	Community participation in YACTAC projects	Riparian and wetland protection and restoration	Efficient water use	Murray-Darling Basin Plan	Flow response monitoring
	Business planning	Aboriginal cultural heritage	Instream habitat restoration	Water quality	NSW State partnerships	Invasive species assessments
Charles at a	NRM Implementation planning	Aboriginal agriculture	Pest plant and animal control	Cultural flows	Strategic adaptive management framework	Water quality monitoring
Strategic priorities	Monitoring evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI)	Cultural ecology and water requirements	Restocking and translocation of native biota	Extreme events management	Strategic adaptive management implementation	Agricultural landscape improvement
	Staff and contract management	Broader community engagement and representation	Ecological database development		Participation in external management processes	Aboriginal water values
	Project management	Open and inclusive political engagement	Weir review and removal			Research partnerships

Environmental assets

The Yanco Creek System boasts several high-value environmental assets, many of which are ecologically significant within the broader Murray-Darling Basin. These assets provide critical habitat for native species, support biodiversity, and contribute to the ecological function of the region. Below is a list of the top environmental assets in the Yanco Creek System:



💋 1. Wetlands

- Located all along the 600kms of waterways.
- Includes billabongs, lagoons, and ephemeral wetlands.
- Supports large populations of waterbirds, frogs, and aquatic vegetation.



🤩 2. Yanco, Colombo & Billabong Creeks

- The main channels themselves are significant assets.
- Provide year-round aquatic habitat for:
 - o Murray cod, Golden perch, Silver perch, Freshwater catfish
 - Trout cod, Olive Perchlet (threatened)
 - Platypus
- Serve as critical refuge zones during dry periods.



🥮 3. Frog and Amphibian Habitats

- Especially important for the Southern bell frog (Litoria raniformis), which is listed as endangered.
- Wetlands and inundation zones triggered by environmental flows create breeding conditions.



4. Rakali (Native Water Rat) Territories

- Rakali (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) plays a vital predator role in creek food webs.
- Its presence is a strong bioindicator of healthy riparian environments.



5. Turtle Nesting and Foraging Zones

- The system supports long-necked turtles and other freshwater species.
- · Healthy banks, low flow areas, and aquatic vegetation provide ideal nesting and feeding conditions.



6. Riparian Vegetation Corridors

- Lined with River Red Gums, black box, and native grasses.
- Crucial for bank stability, water filtration, and wildlife corridors.
- Support nesting birds and arboreal mammals.

7. Native Bat Habitat

- 10 species of native bats have been detected, including the threatened Southern Myotis (*Myotis macropus*).
- Trees with hollows, water proximity, and insect-rich zones support bat roosting and feeding.



8. Waterbird Breeding Sites

- Flooding triggers breeding events for ibis, egrets, herons, and spoonbills.
- Wetland inundation from environmental flows ensures food and nesting material.



Special Mentions:

- Kia Ora, Rhyloa, Wanganella, Bundure, Broome, Widgewa, Hartwood Wetlands: Sites of community-led ecological projects and monitoring.
- Stock and domestic water points that double as habitat for frogs and macroinvertebrates when managed sustainably.

Cultural Significance

The footprint of Yanco Creek System includes the traditional homelands of several Aboriginal Nations including the Bpangerang, Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa and Wiradjuri people. YACTAC acknowledges the sense of ownership and connection to the landscape held by Traditional owners and aboriginal people, past and present. We are working towards the improvement of natural values of the Yanco Creek System in a way that benefits aboriginal places and people.

YACTAC has been working with the local indigenous groups such as Yarkuwa, Narrandera and Deniliquin LALC, and assisted Jerilderie based residents to form the Jeithi Jerilderie Aboriginal Corporation who are keen to develop local employment opportunities for an Indigenous ranger program.

Below is a breakdown of local cultural importance:



Aboriginal Cultural Significance

- Connection: The Bpangerang, Wamba Wamba, Barapa Barapa and Wiradjuri people have lived along the Yanco Creek System for tens of thousands of years. The waterways are deeply tied to their Dreaming stories, cultural practices, and spiritual beliefs.
- Food and Water Source: The creeks provided essential resources—fresh water, fish, yabbies, and plant life. These natural resources supported traditional lifestyles and seasonal movements.

- **Cultural Sites**: There are significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites along the creek system, such as scarred trees, middens, campsites, and ceremonial grounds.
- **Songlines**: The creeks are known and woven into songlines—spiritual pathways that map the land and hold cultural knowledge passed down through generations.

Collaboration and partnerships

Partnerships with many varied community groups; local, state and federal government agencies; environmental groups and indigenous groups are strong and enriching. These partnerships are vital to the continued protection and environmental enhancement of the Yanco Creek System. YACTAC can't improve the waterways and adjacent landscape alone. Likewise state and federal agencies require local community involvement and at times community funding. The relationship is symbiotic. Some examples of agencies YACTAC is a member and/or participant include:

A list of online weblinks has been provided in Appendix 2.

- WaterNSW Customer Advisory Group
- WaterNSW Southern Ops team
- DCCEEW NSW Water Group, ECCS, CPHR
- Dept Primary Industries Fisheries
- Local Land Services
- Env Water Advisory Group Murrumbidgee
- Yanco SDLAM
- NSW Irrigators Council
- LLS Refreshing Rivers Program
- NSW Farmers Association
- Charles Sturt University
- Flow MER Bidgee

- Comm Environ Water Office
- DCCEEW Commonwealth
- Murray Darling Basin Association
- Landcare Murrumbidgee & NSW
- Landcare Murray
- Murray Collective
- Riverina & Murray Joint Org
- Rice Growers Association
- FRRR Community Teams
- Oz Fish
- Jeithi Aboriginal Group
- And many others

Appendix 1



Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc.PO Box 53 HOWLONG NSW 2643

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В	I	<u>U</u>	⊜	X						
undei	rtaken		feedba	ack on you				_		tered. A review is being courages you to complete
YCS	Levy	Survey	,							
Descr	iption	(optior	nal)							
Pleas	se rato	e your	knowl	edge of \	YACTAC a	ictivities.		4	5	
					2	0		7	· ·	
ı	Know	nothing	J	\circ	0	C		0	0	Aware of activities
Plea Syst		te you	r conf	idence ir	1 YACTAC	to unde	rtake wo	orks and	activities	on the Yanco Creek
					1	2	3	4	5	
ا	Low le	evel of	confid	ence	0	\circ	0	\circ	\circ	Completely confident

Yanco Creek and Tributaries Advisory Council Inc Have your interactions with YACTAC been: Yes No Informative? Valuable? Prompt and efficient? Relevant? Acted upon? Effective? How would you rate YACTAC's ability to represent you? 2 3 1 5 Disappointing Exceptional How would you rate YACTAC's ability to achieve improved outcomes for the Yanco Creek System's environment? 1 2 3 5 Disappointing Exceptional How much do you value YACTAC? 1 3 5 Limited value Essential

How important is it to you that YACTAC is a member of various stakeholder groups and committees? 3 4 5 Not important Essential How are you informed of the activities of YACTAC? Tick all that are appropriate. email telephone website quarterly newsletters Facebook word of mouth Other... Do you feel it is important that the YCS levy keeps up with inflation? 2 3 4 Not important Essential

Given the YCS Levy is charged at the initial 2005 rate, are you prepared to increase the rate?

Yes

No

What activities should the YCS Levy be used for?
Environment protection, restoration and management
O Partnership and strategic adaptive mgmt
Community consultation and representation
Ogovernance and administration
Knowledge, research and monitoring
All of the above
Currently YACTAC seeks funding through an annual membership fee and from many other agencies, including grants. Do you fully support this approach? Please write feedback on the "Other" section
○ Yes
No, if not please provide feedback.
Other
The YCS Levy is charged on Water Access Licence volumes within the YCS (not including Supplementary Licences). 2025-2030 YCS Levy proposed charge is to increase in charge each year by 4%. Do you agree?
○ Yes
○ No
Any other questions?
Long answer text

Appendix 2

List of some of the website links to the activities in the YCS, in collaboration with agencies.

YACTAC Website links

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/projects-listing/https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/refreshing-the-central-billabong-1/

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/reports/ https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/strategic-plan-2020-2030/

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/photos-and-videos/videos/

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/photos-and-videos/2024-photos/

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/photos-and-videos/2025-photos/

https://www.facebook.com/YancoCS

https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council/news-listing/

Local Land Services 10 year project Refreshing Rivers

https://www.refreshingrivers.org.au/central-billabong

https://cdn.prod.website-

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