



Charles Sturt
University
—
Gulbali Institute
Agriculture Water Environment



2026 Sustainable Rivers Forum

Event Program



Sustainable Rivers Forum

Dates

Thursday 19th February 2026; 8am – 5.30pm.

Location

Charles Sturt University, CD Blake complex

Event Summary

Join experts and practitioners from across the Murray-Darling Basin for a day of discovery and discussion about pressing issues affecting water management in the Murray-Darling Basin and the broader Indo-Pacific Region.

Challenges Facing Rivers Globally

Rivers are facing complex challenges as they are being expected to balance the needs of people and ecosystems. Regionally, there is an expansion of irrigation and hydropower projects which offer economic and societal benefits but these often disrupt fish migration, alter water flow, impact biodiversity and lead to significant declines in river health. With millions depending on rivers for food security and livelihoods, addressing these issues is critical. This forum will examine the latest research and practical approaches to support sustainable development that preserves both the environment and the river communities that rely on it.

About the Venue and Region

Albury–Wodonga near the headwaters of the Murray River system, a region that plays a critical role in the health and productivity of the Murray–Darling Basin. The upper Murray catchment contains some of the Basin's most significant water storages and river regulation infrastructure, collectively delivering around 32% of the Basin's total water needs.

This region has long been central to Australia's water story. It supports irrigated agriculture, regional towns, industry, energy generation, recreation and high-value riverine ecosystems. Decisions made here reverberate downstream, influencing river health, water availability and community outcomes across multiple jurisdictions.

At the same time, the region reflects the very challenges facing rivers nationally and globally. Ongoing river development, population growth and expanding water demand are occurring alongside a changing climate that is reducing inflows and increasing variability. Competing demands for a finite and increasingly constrained water resource are intensifying, placing pressure on both ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Hosting the Sustainable Rivers Forum in Albury–Wodonga provides an opportunity to engage directly with these realities. It grounds discussions in a landscape where water management is not theoretical, but lived, and where the need to balance environmental outcomes, economic development and social wellbeing is immediate and unavoidable.

Event Organisers



Charles Sturt
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The Gulbali Institute at Charles Sturt University is dedicated to advancing research that enhances the understanding of land and water systems, especially within the unique ecologies of Australia and Southeast Asia's Mekong region. Focusing on sustainable development and environmental resilience, the Institute works to support communities and ecosystems through innovative research and practical solutions. Guided by the Wiradjuri phrase 'Gulbali ngurumbang', our researchers are committed to 'understanding Country' through the establishment of strong, respectful, local partnerships, and implementing sustainable practices that benefit both people and nature.



CSIRO's Water research program aims to help Australia better manage its river basins and groundwater resources, and improve social, economic and environmental benefits through water resources management. They also apply our expertise to international water management projects. CSIRO has delivered decades of world-leading research in the Murray-Darling Basin. Primarily focusing on Assessing water availability in the Basin, Adapting to less water, Sustaining the environment, Ensuring resilient, diverse and healthy communities.

Event Sponsor



The Next Generation Water Engineering and River Management Hub aims to develop solutions to the current and future problems threatening inland Australia's waterways, including diminishing fish stocks and poor water quality. The hub is funded through the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training through the Regional Research Collaborations program and is a major sponsor of this event.

Keynote Speaker Biographies

Session 1: Keynote Speakers

NATALIE KYRIACOU OAM

Natalie is an award-winning environmentalist, presenter, and charity director on a mission to spark curiosity about the natural world. She is the author of *Nature's Last Dance*. Natalie was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia and the Forbes 30 Under 30 Honour for her services to wildlife and environmental conservation in 2018. She was a United Nations Environment Programme Young Champion of the Earth Finalist. She is one of LinkedIn's 2022 'Top Green Voices' and named as one of The Australian's 2022 'Top Innovators'. In 2025, she was named as a Marie Claire "Women of the Year" nominee.

Natalie is the Founder and Chair of My Green World, a Board Director at Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife, a former Board Director at CARE Australia, a W20 Delegate (official G20 engagement group), a UNESCO Green Citizens Pathfinder. She sits on the XPRIZE Global Brain Trust for Biodiversity and Conservation. She is a National Ambassador for the Australian Conservation Foundation.



DR DAVID POST; CSIRO

Dr Post has been a research scientist with CSIRO since 1999 and his research interests focus broadly on the impacts of landuse and climate change on water resources, as well as on the regionalisation of hydrologic response to ungauged areas. He has a PhD in Resource Management from the Australian National University. From 2012 to 2018, he led the Bioregional Assessment Programme, investigating the impacts of coal seam gas and coal mining on water resources and water-dependent assets. Since 2020 he has led the CSIRO consortium delivering to the Murray-Darling Water and Environment Research Program (MD-WERP). He is also the CSIRO Murray-Darling Basin lead.



Morning Session

Time	Program
8.00am	Registration opens
9.00am	Conference host – Introduction to the day's activities <i>CSIRO: Dr Dan Metcalfe. National Director, Environment Program.</i> <i>Charles Sturt University: Prof Lee Baumgartner, Executive Director (Gulbali Institute)</i>
9.20am	Keynote Address; Natalie Kyriacou OAM <i>Nature's Last Dance; Global challenges for ecosystems and our freshwater systems</i>
9.40am	Keynote Address; Dr David Post, CSIRO <i>Climate change in the MDB and consequences for stream flow</i>
10.00am	Panel Discussion with Keynote Speakers <i>QA from the floor</i>
10.30am	Morning Tea Break
<u>Session 1: Environmental Water, Threatened Species and River function</u>	
11:00am	A vision for a large-scale native fish recovery program <i>Associate Professor Ivor Stuart</i>
11.10am	River Murray Monitoring Program - a whole-of-river scale science management collaboration <i>Dr Brenton Zampatti</i>
11.20am	Flow MER: providing the science behind Basin-scale environmental watering <i>Dr Alison King</i>
11.30am	Securing a Future: Managing endangered species in flow-regulated landscapes <i>Professor Skye Wassens</i>
11.40am	Scientists and citizen scientists working in partnership to evaluate the outcomes of environmental flows. <i>Professor Robyn Watts</i>
11.50am	Murray River flood facilitates cross-ecosystem trophic subsidies to marine animals <i>Dr Paul McInerney</i>
12.00pm	Understanding interactive effects of non-flow drivers to improve ecological responses to environmental water in the Murray-Darling Basin' <i>Dr Jackie O'Sullivan</i>
12.10pm	Panel discussion; <i>All session presenters</i>
12.30pm	Lunch Break Gums Cafe

Afternoon Session

Session 2: Innovative Tech, Water quality, International Challenges and River Management

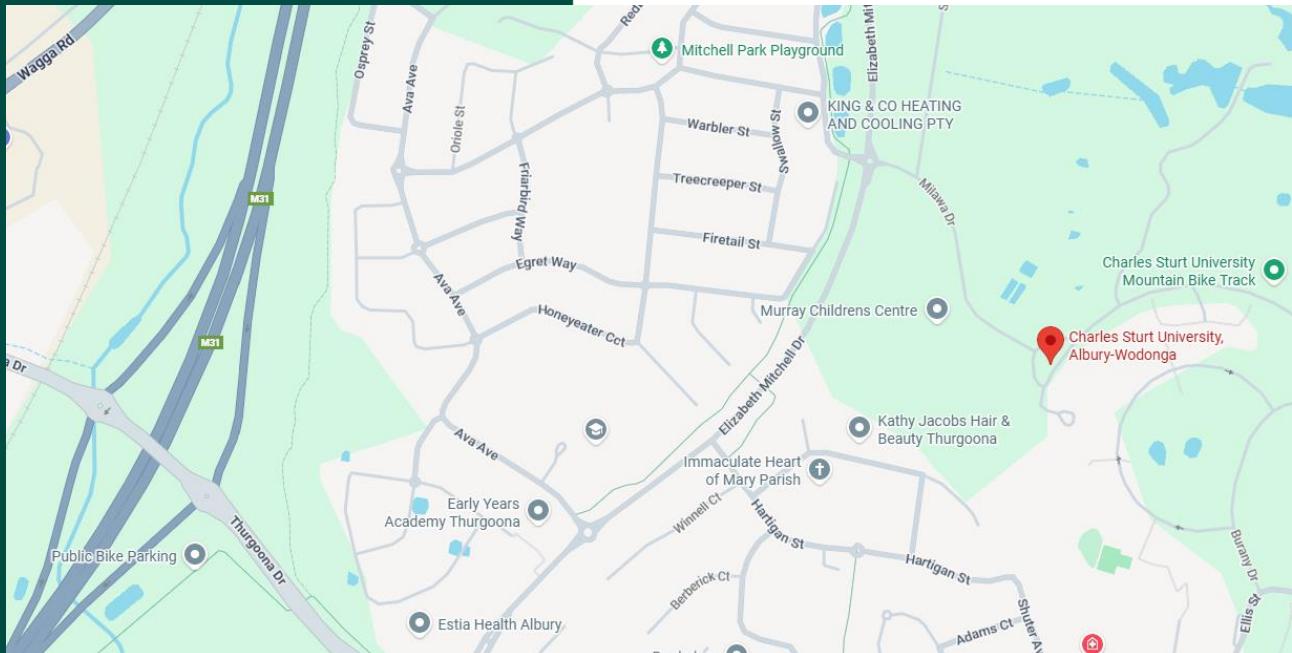
1.30pm	Water quality, Indigenous health and Country: Case Studies from Walgett <i>Wendy Spencer and Zoe Sands, Dharriwaa Elders Group</i>
1.40pm	The Sustainable African Rivers Initiative <i>Associate Professor Gordon O'Brien</i>
1.50pm	Next Generation eDNA: Establishing appropriate genetic baselines for conservation and management decision-making in the Murray Darling Basin <i>Professor Alan Cooper</i>
2.00pm	Impacts of a changing climate and modified rivers on aquatic biota of the Murray Darling Basin <i>Dr Luke McPhan</i>
2.10pm	Can the past be used to guide the path to sustainable river management? <i>Professor Peter Gell</i>
2.20pm	Developing a continental-scale timeseries to track the condition of Australia's freshwaters <i>Dr Darren Giling</i>
2.30pm	Challenges facing rivers globally: River Development, Food Security and Solutions <i>Professor Lee Baumgartner</i>
2.40pm	Panel Discussion; <i>All session presenters</i>
3.00pm	Wrap up; <i>All speakers on stage</i>
3.15pm	Networking event Gums Café; Nibbles provided and drinks at bar prices.
5.30pm	Day concludes and delegates depart

How to find us.....

386 Elizabeth Mitchell Drive, Thургона, NSW, 2640

Event is being held in Building 751.

Adjacent to Car Park (P2)



Gulbali Institute
Agriculture, Water and Environment

Charles Sturt University
Boorooma Street
Locked Bag 588
Wagga Wagga NSW 2678

 1800 275 278 (free call within Australia)
+61 1800 275 278 (callers outside Australia)

 gulbali@csu.edu.au

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