

MAS Presidential Report 2025

This is the end of my second year as President of the MAS. To my mind a lot has happened during this year. Requests for speaking presentations from clubs and organisations interested in the work we do and the issues we face has taken significant time. Add to that the Council of Freshwater Anglers seminar and MAS workshop neither of which would have been a success without the voluntary support from many MAS Members.

The MAS would not have achieved all the things we have been involved in without the support of the MAS Committee. Rod Whiteway, thank you for your support and skill in turning our events into minutes. Rob Edwards, your experience and articulation of all the things I needed to include but either expressed inadequately or forgot. Bill Blair who reads everything and offers sound advice and pathways through complicated rules or webpages. Ash Allen whose enthusiasm is infectious and whose knowledge of local identities and local fishing opportunities is legendary.

In the year ahead we are going to need more hands supporting the MAS work. We need to collect all the emails of all our members both within Member Clubs and others so that the Cooma Branch Rod and Line can be circulated to all MAS members. We need expertise to enhance our footprint in the social media space, and we need someone to keep an account of our new Ordinary Members.

Of course, the biggest issue we face is the stocking bans both within the Snowy Catchment and the Murrumbidgee, and we have not forgotten the Adjungbilly Creek.

The efforts of some of us to participate and have input into river natural resource issues relating to the Snowy Hydro 2 EIS is ongoing and complex. These resource allocation engagement processes are not coming from DPIRD but from the scientific committee attached to the EIS process and the Federal Government.

The Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed (SWIOID), signed in 2002, is the legally binding intergovernmental agreement between the New South Wales (NSW), Victorian, and Australian governments that dictates the environmental water releases into the Snowy and montane rivers. It was established to balance electricity generation by Snowy Hydro

Limited with the environmental health of rivers impacted by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme.

A review of the SWIOID was initiated by the Australian Government in March 2025 to modernize water management and improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River.

The Key Components of the SWIOID Process are;

Environmental Water Target: The SWIOID aimed to return 21% of the average annual natural flow to the Snowy River, with a goal of eventually reaching 28%.

Annual Water Operating Plan (AWOP): The Deed requires Snowy Hydro to operate in accordance with the Snowy Water Licence, which is updated annually to manage water releases.

Governance: The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) regulates the Deed and the Licence.

Scientific Input: The Snowy Advisory Committee (SAC) provides advice on the delivery of environmental water for the Snowy and montane rivers.

Current 2025-2026 Review Process

The 2002 Deed is undergoing a major review, which began in late 2025 and is expected to be finalized by June 2026.

The purpose of which is to improve the health of the upper Murrumbidgee River and adapt to climate change.

Review Panel: An Independent Review Panel was appointed to report to Australian Government ministers.

Stakeholder Engagement: The process includes consultation with First Nations, community stakeholders, and industry to inform decision-making.

The MAS is engaged in this process through the generosity of Guy Verney. His dedication to the task at hand, his understanding of the issues, his commitment in time needs to be recognised and congratulated. We also need to recognise Luke Nuttal as Guy's backup.

The MAS has also engaged with the DPIRD Threatened Species Unit through Luke Pearce who is currently working for the Snowy Hydro EIS process as one of his responsibilities, he has also been working with Trout

Cod (Bluenose) and other threatened freshwater fish species. One of the issues facing the Threatened Species Unit is the infestation at Narrandara endangered freshwater fish hatchery of an invasive shrimp called Shield Shrimp. This infestation has necessitated that this year's stocking plans being altered to allow native fish to be sourced from Snobs Creek in Victoria. MAS is attempting to build trust and a collaborative working relationship with the Threatened Species Unit. One of the ways we are doing this is through the Trout Cod Reintroduction Strategy and an example of collaboration is the agreement on where to stock the trout cod and where to stock the trout. Hence the agreement we have on the Goodradigbee.

Another example is the collaboration between Luke Pearce (DPIRD), Snowy Hydro and MAS regarding Macquarie Perch survival within the Murrumbidgee catchment. The MAS has assisted Luke in finding suitable sanctuaries for the Maccas within the feeder streams of the Murrumbidgee. A site on the Big Badger River below the bridge near Peppers Creek has been agreed. There are a number of pools ending with the Nursery Pool below the bridge suitable for Maccas. The Big Badger has a number of trout stocking sites that will not be impacted by this initiative.

The MAS has supported the classification of Murray Crayfish as a species threatened by predation from humans and cormorants. The crays are good to eat and easy to catch, hence they are threatened.

How do we get both the NSW Government and the Australian Government to invest in the Snowy Catchment.

The easiest way to achieve this is through Snowy Hydro. We already have evidence that Snowy Hydro is willing to invest in the trout fishing recreational activity we all love so much. Snowy Hydro is also investing large quantities of otherwise electricity generating water for environmental flows for the Snowy River.

By working with Snowy Hydro, helping them secure the future of the Stocky Galaxia and the Macquarie Perch (without compromising our ability to stock trout) we are in a good position to ask Snowy Hydro for seed investment within the Snowy catchment.

We want the bans within the Snowy system lifted. (NSW Gov)

For this to occur, we need a better understanding of the Galaxia Terenasus and the key habitats required for their survival. (NSW Gov)

We need a captive breeding program for the Galaxia Terenasus. (NSW Gov)

We need investment in developing sanctuaries for the Galaxia Terenasus. (NSW Gov)

We need wider investment by the Australian Government into restoration of the rivers and streams of the Snowy Catchment. This investment needs to focus on habitat and water quality improvements. (Australian Gov)

Last year the NSW Government initiated an enquiry into Crown Lands and their management. As of this date there has been no outcome to this enquiry. The MAS has made two submissions in an attempt to assist the Government to find ways to simplify this legislation, and have recommended that the Government Agencies train their staff to enable resolution of Crown Land and access issues in a timely manner.

I was up at Gaden Hatchery the other day meeting the new manager Paul Sheather and discussed with him arrangements for the trout stocking program for this year, some issues regarding Paddy's Corner and the arrangements for the construction of the final grow-out facility funded by Snowy Hydro. We discussed design and construction faults with the facility that has just been completed in an effort to avoid the same mistakes with this new build. Public Works are slow to start, perhaps they have started construction this week. We are going to miss Mitch Elkins, he was a good man to work with. Paul the new manager, unfortunately at this stage temporary, has lots of experience and was the deputy at Dutton.

Earlier in 2025 the MAS was contacted by a couple of Monaro landowners concerned with the attitude of some trout fishers who could not understand that being allowed on private land to fish was a privilege and that closing gates was a courtesy. To correct this the MAS went to the expense of having information signs made pointing out the privileges granted and the courtesies involved. We have had no more complaints from those landowners.

The MAS has also gone to the expense to have signs made that point out the trout stocking ban areas and who is responsible. These signs need to be

erected ASAP. Additionally, signs need to be procured to cover all banned sites within the Snowy.

The greatest highlight of the year was the video we were lucky enough to get David Anderson to shoot and edit. What a great video and thanks to the intrepid fishers Rod and Ash, Howard Charles our landowner spokesperson and Steve Samuels for finding the site.

I would like to recognise the contribution made to our activities this year by our legal advisor Adrian Maroya, known by some as a Barrister, others know him as the President of the NSW Rod Fishers Society Inc. The collaboration between Rod Fishers and MAS is historical and I am happy to report, still very strong. One of the old traditions that has fallen by the wayside is the landowner dinners that used to occur annually, mostly in Cooma. Perhaps a resurrection of this tradition is in order.

The issues we have with the NSW Government and their reluctance to invest in natural resource outcomes is much harder to deal with. Quite obviously, the NSW Government does not see freshwater rivers and streams and their environmental health as a priority. Just look at the Murray Darling system and see that outside the water extraction benefits coming from this system there is little or no investment to address the many environmental issues, so why would they invest in the Snowy system.

One last comment. There are people within DPIRD and some urban fishers who believe that there is a need for a Ministerial Peak Body to advise on government activities and investment into the recreational sport we all love, fishing. This initiative stems from the fact that other States within Australia have gone down this path. The MAS executive is concerned firstly by the cost, which most likely will come from the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust, and secondly by the arrogance of the people pushing this initiative whereby they feel they can cut across all the processes and representation that currently exist.

The only way to move the NSW government is through embarrassment, hence the video's, hence the signs, hence the need for more members, hence the interaction with Ministers and local members. These are the tasks for 2026.

Kerry Pfeiffer

