

Managing water in the Murray-Darling Basin...

An aerial photograph of the Murray-Darling Basin, showing a winding river through lush green fields and dense forests. A large blue circle with a white border is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the text 'WHO DOES WHAT?'. The background image is a high-resolution aerial shot, providing a detailed view of the landscape's topography and vegetation.

WHO
DOES
WHAT?

About this booklet

The MDBA is just one of many government agencies involved in the complex work of implementing the Basin Plan.

We have produced this booklet to provide a summary of the roles of some of the key government agencies.

This is an MDBA product and does not seek to explain all the roles in water management.

MDBA

Murray-Darling Basin Authority

DAWR

Department of Agriculture
and Water Resources

CEWH

Commonwealth
Environmental Water Holder


BASIN STATES

Queensland, New South Wales,
Australian Capital Territory, Victoria, South Australia

ACCC

Australian Competition and
Consumer Commission

Environmental watering



Environmental water is water used to improve or maintain the health of a river system.

Photo by Keith Ward

MDBA

- plans for and assists the coordination of environmental watering at a whole-of-basin level, in consultation with the basin states
- developed the long-term environmental watering strategy for the basin
- sets basin-wide environmental watering priorities each year.

BASIN STATES

- have their own environmental water and carry out their own watering activities, see [contacts page](#) for links to state water agencies
- develop their own regional environmental watering plans and decide on how best to use their environmental water in collaboration with the CEWH and river operators

- are guided by the Basin Plan, the MDBA's long-term watering strategy and annual priorities.

CEWH

- holds and manages the Australian Government's water entitlements and allocations
- decides the best ways to use this water to protect and restore the rivers, floodplains and wetlands, in collaboration with state and local water managers, and river operators
- is guided by the Basin Plan, the MDBA's long-term watering strategy, and annual priorities.

To return the Murray-Darling river system to health, 2,750 GL of surface water needs to be recovered for the environment by 30 June 2019.

Recovering water

DAWR

- responsible for advice on progress to reaching the water recovery target and administering water recovery programs
- manages the on and off-farm infrastructure water recovery programs that modernise irrigation infrastructure and improve water efficiency
- administers \$3.2 billion in funding to Victoria and New South Wales for their state-led water infrastructure recovery projects

- carries out strategically important water purchases
- publishes monthly updates on the progress of water recovery efforts
- over 70% of the water recovery target has already been achieved.

BASIN STATES

- implement priority projects, funded by the Australian Government, that recover water for the environment.

The Australian Government has prioritised infrastructure investment as its preferred method of water recovery, and has legislated to cap water purchase at 1,500 GL.



Photo by Russell James, MDBA

Constraints are river rules, practices and structures that affect the volume and timing of regulated water delivery through a river system.



Photo by Arthur Mostead

Managing constraints

BASIN STATES

- are responsible for developing proposals and consulting with communities to address constraints in seven key focus areas
- New South Wales is responsible for leading consultation work in the Yarrawonga–Wakool, Murrumbidgee, Gwydir and lower Darling areas
- Victoria is responsible for proposals in the Hume–Yarrawonga and Goulburn areas
- South Australia is responsible for proposals in the South Australian Murray area.

MDBA

- developed the constraints management strategy, carried out early technical work and consulted with communities on behalf of the states
- provided advice to the states responsible for developing business cases in three River Murray reaches, and other reaches if needed.

The Australian Government will fund proposals to help remove or ease constraints in ways that address any adverse effects on third parties

The northern basin extends north of Charleville in Qld, east to Toowoomba, west of Bourke and down to Bathurst in central NSW.

The Northern Basin Review

MDBA

- is reviewing the sustainable diversion limits in the northern basin based on new social, economic and environmental information
- will recommend whether or not to change some of the northern basin's sustainable diversion limits as a result of the review
- will provide advice on how the water recovery program and how recovering water in different ways and different places, could achieve better social and environmental outcomes.

Who else is involved?

- The Northern Basin Advisory Committee provides advice on the review.
- There is an intergovernmental working group which provides advice and expertise. Advisory groups which report to this group are made up of Queensland and New South Wales state government representatives, local people and university researchers.



Photo by Josh Smith

There is an opportunity to adjust the sustainable diversion limit as long as there is no reduction in environmental, social and economic outcomes.

The sustainable diversion limit adjustment process

MDBA

- developed the scientific method used to independently assess the Australian Government and state proposals to improve water efficiency or achieve better environmental outcomes
- will assess the final package of proposals and make sure the projects deliver the outcomes required.

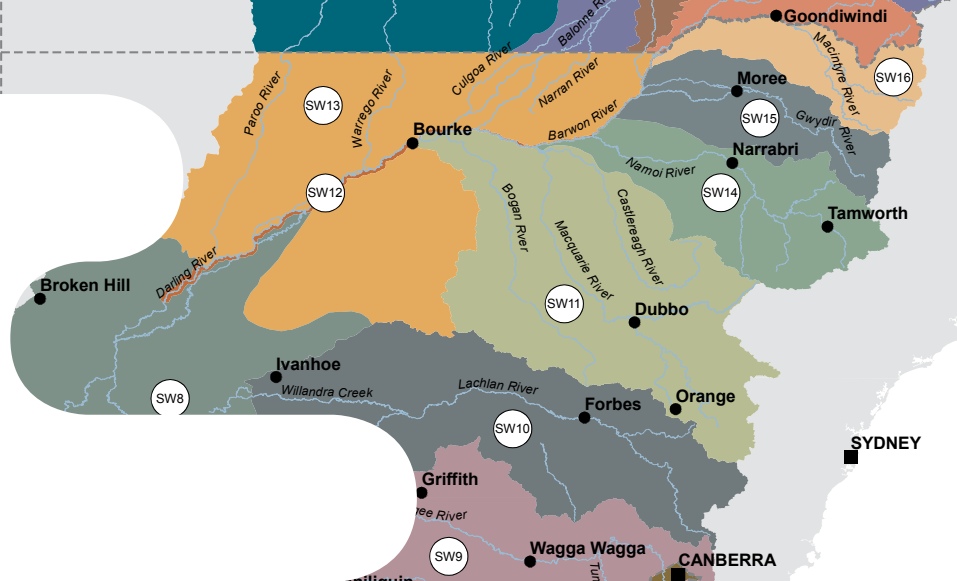
BASIN STATES

- are responsible for developing and implementing the projects and consulting with their stakeholders
- the projects include building environmental floodplain structures to use environmental water more efficiently
- the basin water ministers decide on the final package of projects to be assessed by the MDBA.



The plans set out how water will be managed in an area. The areas generally correspond with basin state water management areas.

Water resource (sharing) plans



MDBA

- works with the basin states to make sure their surface water and groundwater plans meet the requirements set out in the Basin Plan
- assesses the plans to make sure they meet the requirements of the Basin Plan
- makes recommendations to the minister responsible for water (Australian Government) about whether or not the plans should be accredited.

Basin States

- prepare the water resource plans, consistent with Basin Plan requirements
- consult with stakeholders in developing their water resource plans
- implement their water resource plans.

There are 20 surface water resource plan areas and 22 groundwater resource plan areas in the basin.

The water markets in the basin are based on a 'cap and trade' system where the cap represents the total pool of water available for consumptive use.



Photo by Arthur Mostead

Water markets and trading rules

MDBA

- developed new water trading rules to help remove barriers to trade and to provide more information for better transparency in the market. The rules give rights and responsibilities to basin states, irrigation infrastructure operators and the Australian Government
- is responsible for regulating compliance with the new trading rules
- can be contacted if there has been a breach of the rules.

BASIN STATES

- implements the state water trading rules, consistent with the Basin Plan
- determines seasonal water allocations
- distributes the available water to users via water rights administered by the state.

ACCC

- provides advice to the minister responsible for water (Australian Government) on the water market rules and water charge rules, and to the MDBA on water trading rules
- can be contacted for concerns about fair trading or competition issues.

Monitoring
in the basin is done
at a range of scales, from
basin-wide programs to
localised programs at
individual sites.



Photo by Keith Ward

Monitoring and evaluation

MDBA

- leads the monitoring and evaluation at a whole-of-basin scale
- is monitoring the effects of the Basin Plan on the environment, communities and industries
- must report the progress of the MDBA and other Australian Government and state agencies with responsibilities under the Basin Plan.

DAWR

- monitors and evaluates water recovery programs administered by the department including the \$10 billion

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program

- provides key data for evaluating the Basin Plan.

BASIN STATES

- report annually to the MDBA on how they are progressing their work under the Basin Plan
- have their own requirements for monitoring and evaluating their programs and activities. These feed into the Basin Plan evaluation work.

CEWH

- draws on the knowledge and experience of local people and leading researchers, to plan, manage, monitor and evaluate Commonwealth environmental water use, consistent with the goals, objectives and priorities of the Basin Plan
- reports annually on the results of environmental watering.

Advisory
committees provide
valuable advice on our
activities in
the basin.

Advisory committees

MDBA

- receives advice from a number of committees about community feedback and concerns
- committees also provide scientific, social and economic information to help inform the Basin Plan.

Our committees:

- the Basin Community Committee
- the Northern Basin Advisory Committee
- the Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Sciences.



Photo by Nolani McColl

The joint
management of the
River Murray
dates back over
100 years.

The River Murray and joint programs

MDBA

- operates the River Murray on behalf of the basin governments and coordinates the joint programs delivered under those arrangements
- issues flow advice and updates about River Murray conditions and makes sure that the states' water shares are delivered
- manages the assets along the River Murray, including the main storages, locks and weirs, Lower Lakes barrages, environmental regulators and fishways, to deliver water and environmental outcomes

- coordinates The Living Murray program, which aims to return water to the environment and build water management structures to help deliver water more efficiently and effectively.

BASIN STATES

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

- contribute funding to pay for the joint programs and River Murray operations, and decide how that money should be spent. This includes deciding which programs to support
- the states are responsible for the day-to-day operation of the dams, locks, weirs and barrages on the River Murray in their area.



Photo by Brayden Dykes

Modifications
to the Menindee Lakes
began in 1949 so that they
could be used for water
conservation.

Menindee Lakes

MDBA

- operates the River Murray, on behalf of the basin states and the Australian Government
- can place orders for water in the Menindee storage, which NSW has shared with the other basin governments, to support the River Murray when the lakes are at a certain level.

DAWR

- is working with the NSW Government on options for upgrading the Menindee water storage

- is funding work to reduce water loss due to evaporation.

NSW GOVERNMENT

- owns and operates the Menindee Lakes storage at all times
- controls the water in the lakes, including deciding which lakes to store water in, directing all flood operations from the storages and making the releases from the Cawndilla outlet
- has a long-standing agreement with the other basin governments to share the Menindee water when the lakes reach 640 GL and until they drop to below 480 GL. Any changes to this agreement would need to be agreed by all basin governments
- is working with the Australian Government on options for upgrading the Menindee water storage.



Photo by Arthur Mosteard

Contacts

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority

mdba.gov.au

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

environment.gov.au/water/cewo

The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (Water Division)

agriculture.gov.au

NSW Office of Environment and Heritage

environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/water-for-environment.htm

NSW Department of Primary Industries Water

water.nsw.gov.au

ACT Environment and Planning Directorate

environment.act.gov.au/water

The Victorian Environmental Water Holder

www.vewh.vic.gov.au

Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines

dnrm.qld.gov.au/water

The South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

environment.sa.gov.au/Home

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

accc.gov.au

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Cover image: Looking west over the Murray above Albury (photo by Brayden Dykes, MDBA).

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