



Australian Government



**Murray–
Darling
Basin**
Authority

Basin Plan Report Card

June 2024

The Murray–Darling Basin Plan Report Card provides an overview of progress implementing Basin Plan key activities to 30 June 2024.



June 2024 Report Card

The Basin Plan Report Card provides an overview of progress in implementing key activities under the Murray–Darling Basin Plan in the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has a role to monitor progress towards implementing the Basin Plan to achieve a healthy, productive Murray–Darling Basin.

Since [the last report card](#), for the period to 30 June 2023, Basin governments have introduced a range of programs to implement the Basin Plan in full.

In July 2023, following a request from the Australian Minister for the Environment and Water, the [Murray–Darling Basin Authority advised the Minister](#) that full implementation of the Basin Plan would not be possible by the original legislated deadline of 30 June 2024.

This advice contributed to the development of the [Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023](#), enacted on 7 December 2023. The Act made changes to the [Water Act 2007](#) and the [Basin Plan 2012](#) that, together with other reforms, provide more time, more options, more funding and more accountability to [deliver on Basin Plan targets](#).

The Productivity Commission released the [Murray–Darling Basin Plan: Implementation review 2023 report](#) in February 2024, assessing the Basin governments' progress in implementing the Basin Plan since 2018. A number of recommendations were made which are being considered by the Australian Government.

The MDBA continues to prepare for the Basin Plan Review in 2026, with the release of the [Roadmap to Basin Plan Review](#) in June 2023 and the [Early Insights Paper](#) in June 2024. [Six-monthly progress reports](#) provide regular updates on progress towards milestones and engagement activities undertaken to ensure stakeholder views are considered.

The MDBA regularly seeks feedback from communities through the Basin Community Committee, the annual River Reflections conference, its network of regional engagement officers, regional community forums, and by leveraging our existing stakeholder relationships. Communities are continuing to press for transparency and are very interested in implementation of the Basin Plan. First Nations people from across the Basin want to share their traditional knowledge and concerns for Country. The MDBA will maintain a focus on genuine and active engagement to support transparency and access to up-to-date information.

About the report card

The MDBA is a statutory authority of the Australian Government, established to provide independent, expert advice on Basin Plan implementation. An important part of the MDBA's role is to assess and monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Basin Plan, and to provide this information transparently to the community.

This report card is the 11th in the series, providing a short, timely and accurate update on the progress by governments to implement the Basin Plan. The report card includes stakeholder insights from a wide range of sources, including the Basin Community Committee, regional engagement activities, peak bodies, Basin governments and the MDBA's public hotline and email inbox.

The report card does not assess on-ground Basin conditions, or environmental and social trends. These are reported in the 5-yearly Basin Plan Evaluation. The [latest report](#) was released in December 2020 along with recommendations to strengthen the social, cultural, economic and environmental aims of the Basin Plan. The [Framework for the](#)

[2025 Basin Plan Evaluation](#) and the [2025 Basin Plan Evaluation Roadmap](#) will guide the [2025 Basin Plan Evaluation](#), which in turn will inform the 10-yearly review of the Basin Plan in 2026.

This report card describes progress in implementing the Basin Plan from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Changes from the 2023 mid-year report card

Due to the enactment of the [Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023](#) in December 2023, timeframes and options for delivery have changed since the [June 2023 report card](#). Consequently, it was decided not to publish an end-of-year report for 2023.

This report card uses the amended delivery timeframes and new tachometers to reflect the revised priorities to deliver the Basin Plan in full. This includes:

- Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) efficiency measures have been renamed 'Additional 450 GL

Held Environmental Water' to recognise there are more methods of water recovery than just efficiency measures.

- SDLAM supply and constraints measures have been separated into 2 categories, in line with the renewed emphasis on constraints as its own body of work, while maintaining focus on supply projects.

Where assessment methods have changed since the last report card this is noted in the relevant section.

Reporting has not changed for water resource plans, Bridging the Gap water recovery, northern Basin initiatives and environmental water delivery.

Guide to the ratings

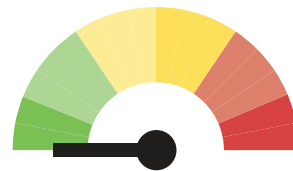


Assessments are made based on progress towards Basin Plan implementation.

The gauges summarise the assessed level of risk to implementation being achieved.

Assessment

The MDBA assesses progress of the key activities of Basin Plan implementation. These activities are interconnected, and the Basin Plan needs all themes to progress in order to deliver a healthy and sustainable Basin.



Water resource plans

- All plans in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory are accredited and in operation.
- The MDBA has had discussions with some state governments about amending accredited plans, but no amended plans have been received to date.



New South Wales water resource plans

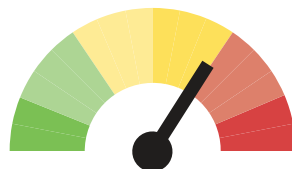
- As of 30 June 2024, New South Wales has 16 of its 20 water resource plans accredited and operational.

Assessment



Water recovery – Bridging the Gap

- [As of 31 March 2024](#), there is 25.1 gigalitres per year (GL/y) remaining to be recovered under Bridging the Gap.
- The amount of water to be recovered to 'Bridge the Gap' will be finalised when all NSW water resource plans are accredited and the long-term diversion limit equivalence factors for NSW are confirmed.
- The Bridging the Gap target will also change with the SDLAM reconciliation in December 2026.



Water recovery – additional 450 GL held environmental water

- [As of 31 March 2024](#), 14.5 GL/y of efficiency measures towards the additional 450 GL/y have been recovered, with a further 11.5 GL/y contracted for delivery.
- The 30 June 2024 deadline to recover the 450 GL/y has been extended to 31 December 2027 and the range of options to recover water has been broadened.



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) – supply measures

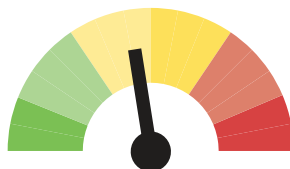
- A recent assessment found that of the 37 original SDLAM projects, 14 are complete and 14 are likely to be delivered in part or in full.
- Sustainable diversion limits will be adjusted after the reconciliation process to reflect the actual volume achieved.
- The deadline for delivery of SDLAM supply projects has been extended from 30 June 2024 to 31 December 2026. New supply measures can be notified by 30 June 2025 and amendments to existing measures must be completed by 30 June 2026.

Assessment



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) – constraints measures

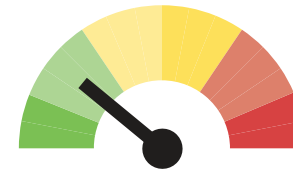
- There has been limited progress in development and implementation of constraints projects since the last report card.
- The deadline for implementing constraints measures projects has been extended to 31 December 2026.
- The MDBA is preparing a [Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap](#) that will support current and future work to remove constraints, or barriers, to the delivery of water for the environment.



Northern Basin Initiatives

Of the 6 Northern Basin Toolkit measures:

- 2 have been completed and have now become embedded as standard practice.
- 2 have made significant progress but were not fully completed by 30 June 2024.
- 2 measures have had their deadlines extended to 31 December 2026.



Environmental water delivery

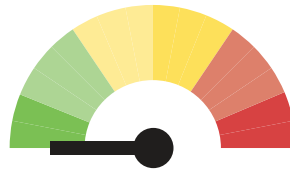
- In 2023–24, environmental water use has consolidated and built on the ecological gains achieved in the wet years of 2020–22. This included providing habitat and food for the many juvenile waterbirds and other animals born during the natural high flows.



Water resource plans

Water resource plans are an integral element of implementing the Basin Plan as they set the rules for how much water can be taken from the system, so that sustainable diversion limits in each area can be upheld over time. The plans also make sure that state and territory water management rules meet the Basin Plan requirements and include arrangements that strengthen water management at a local level.

Water resource plans are developed by Basin governments, assessed by the MDBA, and accredited by the Australian Government minister responsible for water. There are 33 plan areas in total: 14 for surface water, 14 for groundwater and 5 that cover both surface and groundwater. The New South Wales Government has withdrawn 4 water resource plans that had been previously submitted to the MDBA for assessment. When they have been resubmitted to the MDBA for assessment they will be republished on the MDBA website.



Water resource plans

- All plans in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory are accredited and in operation.
- The MDBA has had discussions with some state governments about amending accredited plans, but no amended plans have been received to date.



New South Wales water resource plans

- As of 30 June 2024, New South Wales has 16 of its 20 water resource plans accredited and operational.



Water resource plans

MDBA assessment

- The Basin Plan required Basin states to develop water resource plans by 1 July 2019 to give effect to the long-term average sustainable diversion limits.
- All 13 water resource plans in Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory remain accredited and in operation.
- Since publication of the last Report Card in July 2023, there have been 11 additional plans accredited in New South Wales: Lachlan Alluvium, Murray Alluvium, Murrumbidgee Alluvium, Intersecting Streams, NSW Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Shallow, Murrumbidgee, NSW Border Rivers, NSW Murray and Lower Darling, Lachlan, Macquarie–Castlereagh and Barwon–Darling Watercourse. This brings the total accredited NSW plans to 16.
- The 4 remaining New South Wales water resource plans were withdrawn for further work and will be resubmitted in due course.
- Delays in accreditation of the New South Wales plans has postponed determining the final long-term equivalence volumes required to Bridge the Gap for water recovery.
- The Inspector-General of Water Compliance's powers of enforcement and compliance with sustainable diversion limits are limited where water resource plans are not accredited.
- The MDBA has been providing advice to Basin states about the processes and expectations for amending the currently accredited plans. It is anticipated that Basin governments will work closely with the MDBA before any amendments are submitted for assessment.

What we are hearing

- The Inspector-General of Water Compliance has called for New South Wales to submit its remaining water resource plans for MDBA assessment.
- Affected communities expect water resource plans to be delivered, and there is a sense of frustration that this has not already occurred.
- The MDBA recognises that some First Nations organisations are concerned about the New South Wales engagement approach and accreditation of plans to date.



Water recovery

The Murray–Darling Basin Plan sets 2 water recovery targets to bring the Basin back to a sustainable level of environmental health – Bridging the Gap, and the recovery of an additional 450 GL held environmental water.

The Basin-wide water recovery target to Bridge the Gap between historic water overuse and a sustainable level of use is 2,750 GL. This target was calculated by comparing the difference between the Baseline Diversion Limit (BDL) and the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL). The Basin Plan was amended in 2018 to reflect several initiatives that would better manage water for local communities, the environment and future generations. The quantity of the Gap will be finalised once all New South Wales water resource plans have been accredited, which is also dependant on SDLAM projects being delivered by 2026.

In line with the [Northern Basin Review](#) (a reduction of 70 GL) and the [Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism](#) (a reduction of 605 GL), the Bridging the Gap

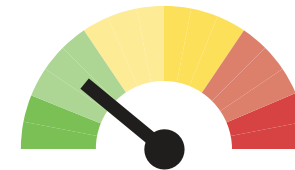
water recovery target was reduced from 2,750 GL to 2,075 GL per year.

The Water Act provides for the recovery of 450 GL of additional environmental water to achieve enhanced environmental outcomes. The Minister must take all reasonable steps to meet the 450 GL target by 31 December 2027.

The Australian Government has 3 guiding principles for recovering water to meet the 450 GL target:

- enhanced environmental outcomes
- minimising socio-economic impacts
- achieving value for money.

The recovered water will be held by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder or the relevant state environmental water holder and be used to achieve Basin Plan environmental watering objectives.



Water Recovery – Bridging the Gap

- [As of 31 March 2024](#), there is 25.1 GL per year (GL/y) remaining to be recovered under Bridging the Gap.
- The amount of water to be recovered to ‘Bridge the Gap’ will be finalised when all New South Wales water resource plans are accredited and the long-term diversion limit equivalence factors for New South Wales are confirmed.
- The Bridging the Gap target will also change with the SDLAM reconciliation in December 2026.



Water recovery

MDBA assessment

- [As of 31 March 2024](#), the contracted (including registered) surface water recovery is estimated to be 2,129.9 GL/y, and the contracted groundwater recovery is estimated to be 35.2 GL/y.
- As of 31 March 2024, there is 25.1 GL/y remaining to Bridge the Gap.
- Recovery of an additional 3.2 GL/y is required in the Upper Condamine Alluvium, which has a target of 38.5 GL/y.
- Water recovery at the Basin scale is at 99% of the Bridging the Gap target for surface water and at 92% for groundwater.
- The total amount of water recovered across the Basin is higher than the overall target of 2,075 GL/y due to over-recovery in some catchments, but local recovery targets must still be met in all catchments.
- In 2023, the Australian Government tendered to purchase water rights of 44.3 GL/y. It is expected there will be a [total estimated recovery of around 26.7 GL/y](#) once all the contracts have been finalised.
- In April 2024, the [ACT Government agreed](#) to recover 6.36 GL/y, which fulfils the ACT's water recovery obligations.

What we are hearing

- Most Basin communities support full implementation of the Basin Plan. For some, there are concerns about the use of water buybacks to address shortfalls in water recovery, particularly in regions with irrigation networks where there are major concerns about the permanent loss of water from the consumptive pool. For others, delays in water recovery and the significant costs and time taken to recover water through infrastructure projects also continue to be ongoing issues.
- Communities in Victoria and South Australia feel they have done the majority of the 'heavy lifting' in the water recovery effort.
- Where there has been over-recovery of water, those communities want the water to be returned to them.



Water recovery



Water recovery – additional 450 GL held environmental water

- [As of 31 March 2024](#), 14.5 GL/y of efficiency measures towards the additional 450 GL/y have been recovered, with a further 11.5 GL/y contracted for delivery.
- The 30 June 2024 deadline to recover the 450 GL/y has been extended to December 2027 and the range of options to recover water has been broadened.

MDBA assessment

- The 2023 review of the Water for the Environment Special Account indicated that meeting the original 30 June 2024 deadline to implement efficiency projects to recover 450 GL/y was not achievable.
- Subsequently, the [Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023](#) increased the options for recovering water for the environment, and the timeframe for delivering the 450 GL/y target was extended from June 2024 to 31 December 2027.
- Recent activities to progress recovery of the 450 GL include:
 - A [framework for delivering the 450 GL of additional environmental water](#) was released in July 2024.
 - The [Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program](#) was established to provide funding of up to \$494 million over 4 years from 2023–24 for Basin states to propose state-led water projects to improve water management, reduce water losses in water for production, and return water to the environment.
- A [Voluntary Water Purchase Program](#) to purchase up to 70 GL/y of surface water is open from 15 July 2024 to 11 September 2024.
- In response to a request from the Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) on 28 April 2024, the [MDBA provided advice to DCCEEW](#) on the recovery of the additional 450 GL.
- The [Restoring Our Rivers Trading Strategy 2024–25](#) has been released.
- The [Sustainable Communities Program](#) provides \$300 million over 4 years from 1 July 2024 to Basin states for communities impacted by water recovery.



Water recovery

What we are hearing

- Basin communities believe that these key elements of the Basin Plan will not be delivered on time and are calling for a clear plan to manage and finalise implementation, preferably without buybacks.
- Many communities are opposed to the recent voluntary water purchase program, saying it will irreversibly harm their economies. They are calling on the Australian Government to reverse its decision and focus on other mechanisms to achieve the target measures. Others perceive this program as essential to recover water as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- The \$300 million Sustainable Communities Program is considered by many communities and organisations to be insufficient to repair the anticipated impacts from the water purchase program.



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism

The Basin Plan establishes sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) which set limits on how much water can be used for consumptive purposes (such as towns, communities, farmers and industries) in the Murray–Darling Basin, while leaving enough water in the system to sustain natural ecosystems. In 2012, Basin governments agreed on a mechanism to adjust these limits on the basis that there are better ways to manage the system that still achieve equivalent environmental outcomes but with less water.

The SDL adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) involves 3 elements that work together: the ‘supply’ and ‘constraints’ projects that improve river management and achieve equivalent environmental outcomes with less water recovery, and the ‘efficiency measures’ that modernise water delivery infrastructure for consumptive users, with some of the water savings through efficiency measures transferred to the environment and the balance remaining with the proponent of the measure.

In 2017, Southern Basin governments brought forward 37 supply projects. The 2017 SDLAM determination found that these projects, as a package, could deliver a 605 GL/y offset. This meant 605 GL/y less water would need to be recovered from consumptive users, while still achieving equivalent environmental outcomes sought by the Basin Plan. Southern Basin states governments are responsible for the design and implementation of these projects, with funding from the Australian Government.

Under the Basin Plan, the MDBA is required to assess whether the notified measures have been implemented as proposed and can achieve the adjustment determined in 2017. Under the Basin Plan if it appears to the Authority that notified measures are not implemented or are amended in a way that would impact on the adjustment amounts in the 2017 determination, the MDBA must conduct a reconciliation; the result of which will be a new determination volume.

The the [*Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023*](#) extended the timeframe for delivery of SDLAM supply projects to 31 December 2026, and provided opportunity for new projects to be notified and more time for amendments to be made to existing projects.



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) – supply measures

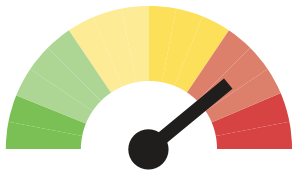
- A recent assessment found that of the 37 original SDLAM projects, 14 are complete and 14 are likely to be delivered in part or in full.
- Sustainable diversion limits will be adjusted after the reconciliation process to reflect the actual volume achieved.
- The deadline for delivery of SDLAM supply projects has been extended from 30 June 2024 to 31 December 2026. New supply measures can be notified by 30 June 2025 and amendments to existing measures must be completed by 30 June 2026.

MDBA assessment

- The [Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023](#) extended the timeframe for delivery of SDLAM supply projects to 31 December 2026. Basin states also have until June 2025 to notify new projects, and June 2026 to amend or withdraw existing projects.
- The June 2024 [Independent Assessment of the Murray–Darling Basin’s Supply and Constraints Measures](#) found that of the 37 original SDLAM projects:
 - 14 are considered complete
 - 1 has been withdrawn
 - 1 was not in scope of the assessment as it does not contribute to an offset
 - 10 are likely to be delivered in full
 - 4 are likely to be delivered in part
 - 8 are unlikely to be delivered by 31 December 2026.
- The independent assessment restated an estimated shortfall of between 190 and 315 gigalitres, consistent with the MDBA’s 2023 Assurance report.
- The sustainable diversion limits will be adjusted after the reconciliation of SDLAM projects by 31 December 2026, to reflect the actual volume of water recovered. The revised supply contribution estimates will not be known until the MDBA has completed the reconciliation process by 31 December 2026.



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) – constraints measures

- There has been limited progress in development and implementation of constraints projects since the last report card.
- The deadline for implementing constraints measures projects has been extended to 31 December 2026.
- The MDBA is preparing a [Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap](#) that will support current and future work to remove constraints, or barriers, to the delivery of water for the environment.

MDBA assessment

- As of 30 June 2024:
 - New South Wales and South Australia are developing full business cases for the Murrumbidgee and SA Lower Murray measures, with both having commenced on-ground early infrastructure works.
 - Victoria released its feasibility study for the Goulburn measure in June 2024.
 - New South Wales continues its community consultation and technical investigations for the Hume to Yarrawonga and Yarrawonga to Wakool Junction measures, and is investigating re-scoping options for the Lower Darling measure.
- The MDBA is preparing a Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap that will support Basin states to maximise the benefits of their projects to deliver environmental outcomes, in a consistent and prioritised way. The roadmap will be published by 31 December 2024.
- The [Water Amendment \(Restoring Our Rivers\) Act 2023](#) provided additional time (until 31 December 2026) for Basin state governments to work with communities to design and implement the constraints measures projects.



Sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism

What we are hearing

- There is genuine disappointment in the communities where supply measure projects will not be proceeding. Community members have volunteered many hours to draft plans that will not proceed to construction, even though they have been agreed at the community level.
- Communities that have invested their time in the constraints project measures are hopeful that these will be delivered.



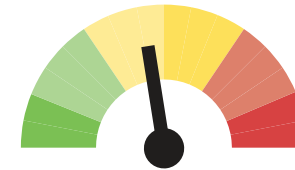
Northern Basin Initiatives

The [Northern Basin Toolkit](#) is a package of measures to enhance environmental outcomes by improving water management practices and the passage of flow without depending on additional water. The 6 measures are:

1. arrangements to protect environmental flows
2. targeted recovery of water
3. event-based mechanisms for environmental water delivery
4. improvements to the coordination and delivery of environment water
5. environmental works and measures to promote fish movement and habitat
6. removal of physical constraints in the Gwydir catchment to improve flows to the wetlands

The measures are not a contribution to, or an offset for, water recovery and do not seek to provide equivalent outcomes to the 70 gigalitre SDL increase that was an outcome of the [Northern Basin Review \(2017\)](#). The New South Wales and Queensland governments adopted a range of toolkit measures that are complementary to water recovery, with assistance from the Australian Government.

The deadline for delivery of the Northern Basin Toolkit was originally 30 June 2024. The implementation timeline for 2 toolkit measures – Gwydir constraints, and environmental works and measures – has now been extended until 31 December 2026.



Northern Basin Initiatives

Of the 6 Northern Basin Toolkit measures:

- 2 have been completed and have now become embedded as standard practice.
- 2 have made significant progress but were not fully completed by 30 June 2024.
- 2 measures have had their deadlines extended to 31 December 2026.



Northern Basin Initiatives

MDBA assessment

- Measurable progress has occurred in this reporting period. Of the 6 toolkit measures:
 - 2 measures have been completed in this reporting period – the coordinated planning and delivery of water for the environment; and options to support event-based environmental water delivery.
 - 2 measures have made significant progress and are on track for likely completion by the end of 2024 – the protection of water for the environment; and targeted water recovery.
 - 2 measures have had their timeframes extended to December 2026 are being rescoped by Basin states which will improve the likelihood of delivery – environmental works; and Gwydir constraints. ([Gwydir Reconnecting Watercourse Country Program](#))
- The environmental works toolkit measure includes a suite of projects being delivered by the New South Wales and Queensland governments which aim to promote fish movement, reduce fish extraction during pumping and improve environmental water delivery to key ecological assets. Some projects have commenced on-ground delivery, however there remain some schedule, budget and scope risks to full delivery by 31 December 2026.
- The Gwydir constraints measure is being delivered by NSW through the [Gwydir Reconnecting Watercourse Country Program](#). There is severe risk to the delivery of the full program of work by December 2026, but the NSW and Australian governments are working together to ensure tangible environmental outcomes are achieved that are consistent with the original objective of this toolkit measure.

What we are hearing

- Several communities support the concept of improving river connectivity and fish passage. However, where there are plans to alter existing weir structures that supply water to communities along the Barwon and Darling rivers, communities have opposed the plans and asked that the New South Wales Government to rethink its approach. The main concerns relate to reduced volumes of water stored in weir pools for critical human needs.
- While there is community support for the protection of environmental flows along the Barwon and Darling Rivers, consumptive users are concerned the measures will impact on the times when they can extract water to fill on-farm storage dams.

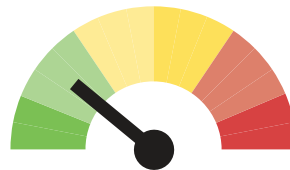


Environmental water delivery

The health of our rivers is crucial for all Australians. Water for the environment is carefully managed to improve the health of rivers, wetlands and floodplains, which benefits communities and farmers. Water is allocated to environmental water holders across the Basin, who make decisions about when, where, and how much water is released for the environment. Stakeholders and partners across government agencies, advisory bodies, community groups and First Nations groups contribute to environmental watering.

A number of organisations hold water for the environment across the Basin. The [Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder](#) has the largest portfolio of environmental water entitlements and works with other environmental water holders and river operators to manage environmental water across the whole Basin. The MDBA provides advice and guidance to support the planning of when and where to release environmental flows, primarily through the MDBA [Basin-wide Watering Strategy](#) and the [Annual](#)

[Environmental Watering Priorities](#). On behalf of Basin governments, the MDBA also manages water for the environment held by [The Living Murray program](#).



Environmental Water Delivery

- In 2023–24, environmental water use has consolidated and built on the ecological gains achieved in the wet years of 2020–22. This included providing habitat and food for the many juvenile waterbirds and other animals born during the natural high flows.

MDBA assessment

- Environmental water delivery is [making a difference](#) in the River Murray. There have been strong vegetation responses across much of the floodplain, and large numbers of juvenile waterbirds born after flooding and follow-up environmental water delivery. However, there are challenges that water for the environment has limited impact on, such as the condition of the southern Coorong.
- In the southern Basin, coordinated environmental flows across the Murray, Goulburn, Murrumbidgee, and Lower Darling (Baaka) River in spring 2023 improved connectivity and ecological outcomes along the length of the river to the Murray Mouth.
- In November 2023, the Australian Government committed \$55.6 million for a range of measures to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee, acknowledging its declining condition.



Environmental water delivery

- In June 2024, Basin governments – with the support of MDBA and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder – agreed to fast track a trial to connect environmental water between the northern and southern Murray Darling Basin. About 40 GL of held environmental water flows from the northern Basin were protected through Menindee Lakes. The water was delivered as a pulse in the Lower Darling (Baaka) River, to address water quality issues, and into the River Murray to improve overall river health for native fish and the local community.
- In the northern Basin, environmental water delivery in 2023–24 occurred in the Gwydir, Namoi, Peel, Macquarie, Warrego, Condamine-Balonne and Barwon-Darling to support native fish, wetland vegetation, water quality and improved flow connectivity.
- A range of improvements to support environmental water planning and delivery are underway, including pre-requisite policy measure improvements to protect environmental water from re-regulation; and the [Enhanced Environmental Water Delivery Project](#) to develop new tools and systems for decision making.
- Realising the environmental outcomes will continue to be limited without the relaxation of flow constraints that prevent delivery of environmental water to more parts of the floodplain.

What we are hearing

- Local communities largely see the benefits provided by water for the environment and other natural resource management initiatives to improve the health of rivers and floodplains.
- Strong community support was expressed in the Menindee region for the flush flows to improve downstream water quality and river health.
- There was strong community support to improve ecological health and water quality of the Upper Murrumbidgee River, with deep concern about environmental degradation, feral animals and plants (in river and in the riparian zone).
- First Nations people's involvement and partnerships in environmental water delivery is growing, but there is a recognised need to do more.



Australian Government



**Murray-
Darling
Basin
Authority**

Office location | *First Nations Country*

Adelaide | *Kurna Country*

Canberra | *Ngunnawal Country*

Goondiwindi | *Bigambul Country*

Griffith | *Wiradjuri Country*

Mildura | *Latji Latji Country*

Murray Bridge | *Ngarrindjeri Country*

Wodonga | *Dhudhoroa Country*

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