



Australian Government



Murray-Darling Basin 2018–19 Environmental watering priorities

Water for the environment maintains and improves the health of rivers, and protects plants, animals and iconic landscapes that depend on them. A healthy river system supports communities and agriculture. Each year, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority sets **annual environmental watering priorities**. Conditions in the Basin were dry and warm in 2017–18. With dry conditions expected to continue, the key focus this year will be on maintaining progress in drier regions and building on improvements in wetter regions.

Water for the environment restores river health by targeting flows to where nature needs it.

What needs watering in 2018–19?

- The **Barwon-Darling river system** needs water to flow again so native fish can reach their natural habitat to feed, grow and breed.
- The **Coorong, Lower Lakes and the Murray Mouth** needs water to revive internationally significant wetlands to grow foraging habitat for migratory shorebirds.
- **Important wetlands** across the Murray-Darling Basin need watering so native waterbirds, fish and plants, including threatened species, can feed, grow and breed.

For more information, visit
mdba.gov.au/e-water-priorities

Connect with us.

The MDBA has offices in Adelaide, Albury-Wodonga, Canberra, Toowoomba, and regional engagement officers around the Basin.

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Environmental Watering Priorities | Murray-Darling Basin Authority

What makes a river healthy?

A connected river is a healthy river. Connected rivers help native fish, waterbirds and plants thrive, which is a sign of a healthy river. This provides good water quality for communities and the environment, and supports tourism and agriculture.

The bigger plan

The annual priorities are small steps for the upcoming year. They fit into a long-term plan to restore health to the Murray-Darling Basin's rivers. Improving river health takes time. Some priorities will take a number of years to achieve – that's why the Coorong remains a priority – each small step is a step towards achieving a long-term outcome.

For the full story visit the Basin-wide watering strategy on
mdba.gov.au/bws

Who delivers water for the environment?

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority provides environmental water holders with advice and guidance on when and where to release water for the environment. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Basin states deliver water for the environment depending on local, regional and cultural needs and climatic conditions.

Delivering water for the environment in 2018–19



Coordinated flows in the Barwon–Darling

Reconnect the northern and southern Basins to keep rivers flowing. Improve water quality by allowing nutrients to flow between main rivers and wetlands.



Support recovery of native fish populations - help native fish feed, grow and breed.



Improve habitats – help waterbirds to nest, grow and breed.



Keep wetlands wet – help plants grow and flourish, including lignum shrublands—the principal floodplain and wetland shrub species.



Flows to the Lower Lakes, Coorong & Murray Mouth

Supply much needed freshwater to improve water quality by flushing salt and sediment out to sea.



Support recovery of native fish populations – help fish move between the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth to feed, grow and breed.



Maintain seasonal water levels – to grow food for migratory shorebirds to refuel on global journeys.



Keep wetlands wet – grow *Ruppia tuberosa*, an aquatic plant, for invertebrates, fish and waterbirds.



Reconnect southern Basin rivers

Reconnect rivers in the south to help native fish move between rivers and recover fish numbers where they are low.



Support native fish populations, including threatened species - help Golden and Silver perch move between rivers to grow and breed where numbers are low.



Improve habitats - help waterbirds across many significant wetlands to nest, grow and breed.



Keep wetlands wet – help lignum shrublands grow and flourish along the southern rivers.

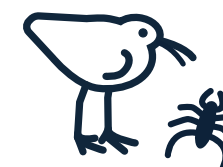


For example:



Flow helps native vegetation grow

which provides habitat for invertebrates and fish.



Migratory shorebirds eat invertebrates



so they can journey across the globe to places like Japan and Siberia and return to Australia next year.



Waterbirds depend on our rivers and wetlands to feed, nest and breed, as well as for protection from predators.



The Murray–Darling Basin has over 60 species of native fish, including some threatened species unique to Australia.











Plants improve water quality and provide shelter, food and shade for Australia's birds and animals.



Environmental watering priorities in 2018-19

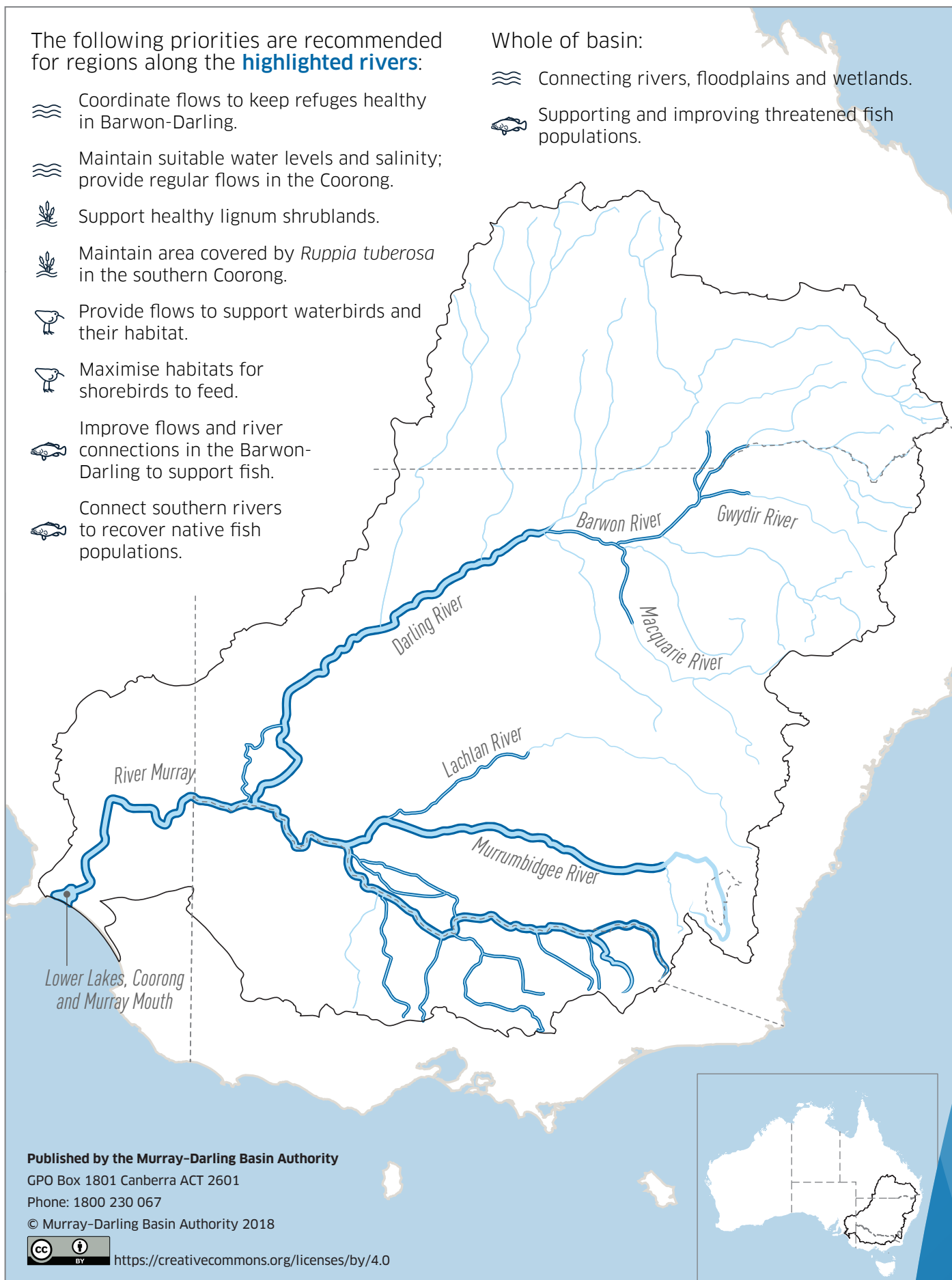
Each year the Murray-Darling Basin Authority sets priorities to guide environmental watering across the Basin to restore river health.

The following priorities are recommended for regions along the **highlighted rivers**:

-  Coordinate flows to keep refuges healthy in Barwon-Darling.
-  Maintain suitable water levels and salinity; provide regular flows in the Coorong.
-  Support healthy lignum shrublands.
-  Maintain area covered by *Ruppia tuberosa* in the southern Coorong.
-  Provide flows to support waterbirds and their habitat.
-  Maximise habitats for shorebirds to feed.
-  Improve flows and river connections in the Barwon-Darling to support fish.
-  Connect southern rivers to recover native fish populations.

Whole of basin:

-  Connecting rivers, floodplains and wetlands.
-  Supporting and improving threatened fish populations.



Published by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority

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