

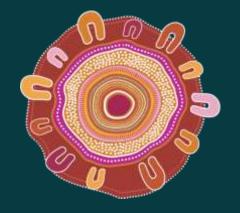
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

# River Reflections Conference 2024

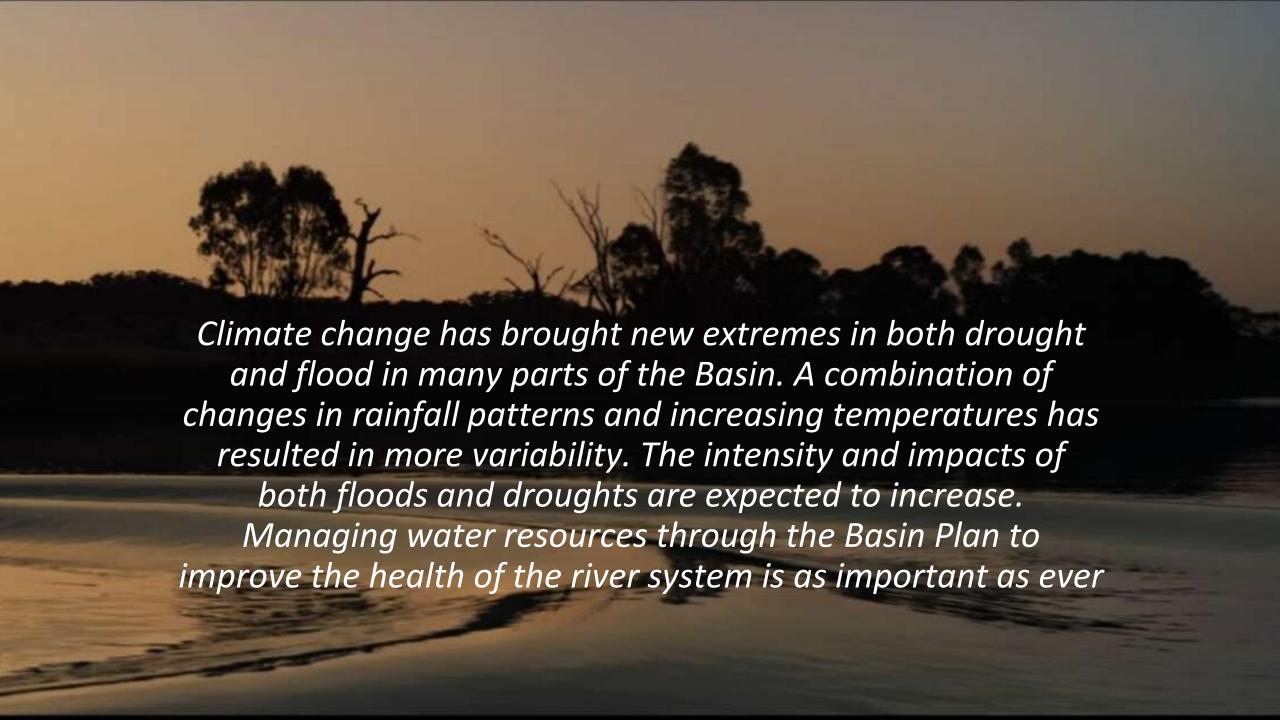
Implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Rachel Connell 19 June 2024





We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.



# **Murray-Darling Basin**



provide drinking water for more than 3 million Australians



supply water to make farmland more productive – an important sector that generates more than \$8.5 billion to the Australian economy every year



bring tourism to the Murray-Darling Basin, contributing \$15 billion to the region

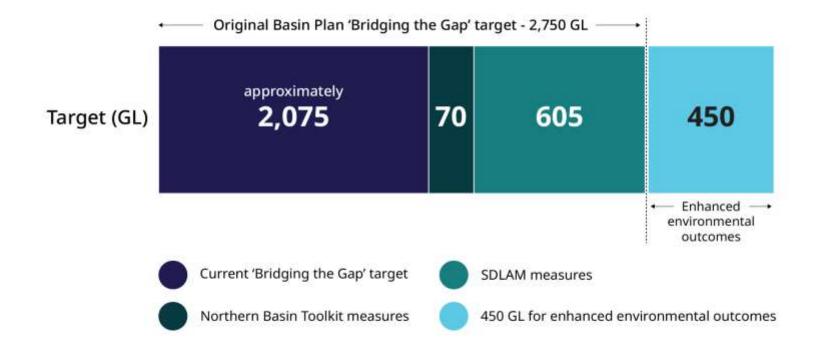


are home to many unique and iconic animals including more than 50 endangered species, 120 different species of waterbirds, and 50 native fish species.

Taking water from our rivers and storing it in dams has dramatically changed how much water flows through the rivers of the Murray-Darling Basin.

#### More than 2180 GL of water has been recovered

#### The Murray-Darling Basin Plan: a 3200 gigalitre (GL) plan



# Taking stock

The Australian Government investment to date:

More than \$3.7 billion spent/ committed for infrastructure to recover nearly 700 GL.

More than \$3 billion spent/ publicly committed to purchase nearly 1300 GL.

More than **\$1.5 billion** spent/ committed for SDLAM projects

More than \$3.2 billion for other Basin initiatives, including more than \$1 billion in environmental projects and other complementary measures.

There is still more to do:

**26 GL** to bridge the current gap

**422.5 GL** to the 450 GL to enhance environmental outcomes.

Complete SDLAM projects

Maximise the impacts of water recovery by relaxing constraints

Improve outcomes for First Nations

4 NSW Water Resource Plans

# Water reform – the case for change











#### AGREEMENT OF MURRAY-DARLING BASIN MINISTERS TO DELIVER THE BASIN PLAN IN FULL

#### 22 AUGUST 2023

The Murray Darling South Ram is a major inter-government initiative to provide water for riverine. Receiption and wetland conveniments of the Murray Darling Statin.

A Southly, and customable river system is reportant for floats communities, agriculture, first Nations and misuths it customs impedien, sourcem, recreation, surface in one and provides critical dinning value.

The purpose of the Basin Flan is to provide for the integrated management of the Basin water resources by:

- resulting and enforcing environmentally custainable limits on water take;
- providing for environmental objectives for water-dependent ecosystems and water quality and saliesty objectives;
- providing for the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental economics, and
- giving effect to international agreements.

The Millermium drought, sumblend with increasing water use, resulted in major damage to the Murray-Carling sestem. The Basin Plan was developed as a response to this.

te the faxo of an increasingly harsh clease, the Bacin Plan is more important than even it is received to connect rivers along their fall length, to recovered their river sharenest or their floorigations, he provide changed increases for all dependent conversables, and to improve water qualities.

The Matter Act 2007 (CIA) and Gassi Plan set type water recipiery Largests a target to "bridge the gap" to long-term serings Socialisable Oversion Limits (IOSLs) and a target to recover 450 gigatims a pass of additional environmental sealer.

The Murray-Darling Basin-Ham is shar for completion by 30 none 2004. The numerical Minoter for the Environment and Water, the Hen. Tange Pillereck MF, street the Minotey-Darling Basin Authority (ASDRA' to provide advice or her allow devices the Start None could be extra within that thereing.

The MDBA solving the Minister that full implementation of the Basin Plan will not be possible by 30 June 2026, under the current settings.

In October 2002, after the first meeting of the Marring During Bases Ministered Council in over-less years, Ministers resistand their commitment to weak tigenfler in a spirit all acoptisation and collaboration to overcome file challenges to deburing the Sain Plan. All that their, Nevertain option significant challenges centure to explore the shared Basin Plan commitments by 30 June 2024, given stalled grapes seer the last five years and the missioning time failure.

When Ministers met again in February 2023, they re-asserted their determination to deliver the Basin Plan in full and discussed a range of spitters to progress delivers, Ministers tasked officials to 2022-2023

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

As proved by both House

Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023

No. , 2023

A Bill for an Act to amend the Water Act 2007, and for related purposes

## The Restoring Our Rivers Act 2023 - overview

- Timeframe to deliver viable SDLAM projects extended to 31 December 2026
- More water recovery options to deliver the 450 GL/y by 31 December 2027
- Removing the statutory 1,500 GL/y cap on water purchase
- Minister to consider socio-economic impacts of 450GL voluntary water purchase programs
- MDBA to develop a **Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap** by the end of 2024
- Strengthening the powers of the Inspector-General of Water Compliance
- Explicitly recognising First Nations' outcomes
- Basin Plan review to consider the management of climate change risks
- Significant reforms to improve the integrity and transparency of water markets

### **First Nations outcomes**

- The Water Act now provides:
  - That the Act and Basin Plan must take into account spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic matters relevant to First Nations people,
  - For a second First Nations member of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority
- The Australian Government has also provided:
  - \$20 million for Cultural Flows Cultural Economy
  - \$60 million in additional funding for the Aboriginal Water

Entitlements Program (AWEP) – for a \$100m investment

### Improving the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee

Commitments to improve the health of the Upper Murrumbidgee:

- \$30 million to support the supply of additional water to the upper Murrumbidgee if drought-like conditions occur between now until 2028.
- \$4.8 million for the review of the Snowy Water Inquiry Outcomes Implementation Deed
  - Plus \$500,000 for First Nations participation
- \$15 million over three years to improve catchment and river health
  - Plus an additional \$5 million to support the science and monitoring

#### **Supply and Constraints**

Under the new timelines, states have until:

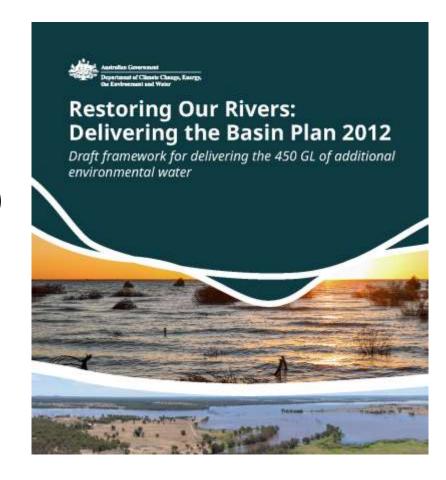
- **30 June 2025** To propose new SDLAM projects
- 30 June 2026 To amend or withdraw existing projects
- **31 December 2026** To deliver these projects

There is also increased accountability:

1 project has been withdrawn – Yanko Creek Offtake

## Framework for delivering the 450 GL

- Draft policy framework released 30 January 2024
- Tools that could be used to deliver the 450 GL
- Proposed implementation approach for 2024
- Water recovery will be informed by three key (statutory) principles:
  - enhancing environmental outcomes
  - minimising socio-economic impacts
  - achieving value for money.



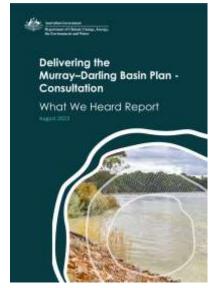
## Framework for delivering the 450 GL

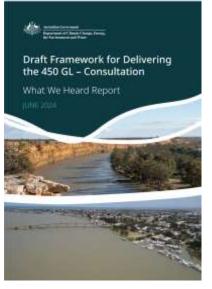
The draft framework outlines three programs to deliver the 450 GL target.

- 1. Resilient Rivers Program open and over \$520 million available for infrastructure projects. Can expand to include rules changes, land and water partnerships, and other ways to recover water
- 2. Sustainable Communities Program open and more than \$300 million available to states for community adjustment assistance for Basin communities impacted by voluntary water purchase.
- 3. Voluntary Water Purchase purchase of water entitlements from willing sellers by the Commonwealth

## What we heard – strategic and innovative delivery

- The three principles enhancing environmental outcomes, minimising socio-economic impacts and achieving value for taxpayers money – were broadly supported.
- The approach to implementation and funding should be flexible to facilitate strategic and innovative approaches.
- Some states, irrigation networks and peaks want the option of an integrated approach across the three programs.
- We are working on to provide an integrated pathway across infrastructure, water purchase and sustainable communities.





# What we heard – Sustainable Communities

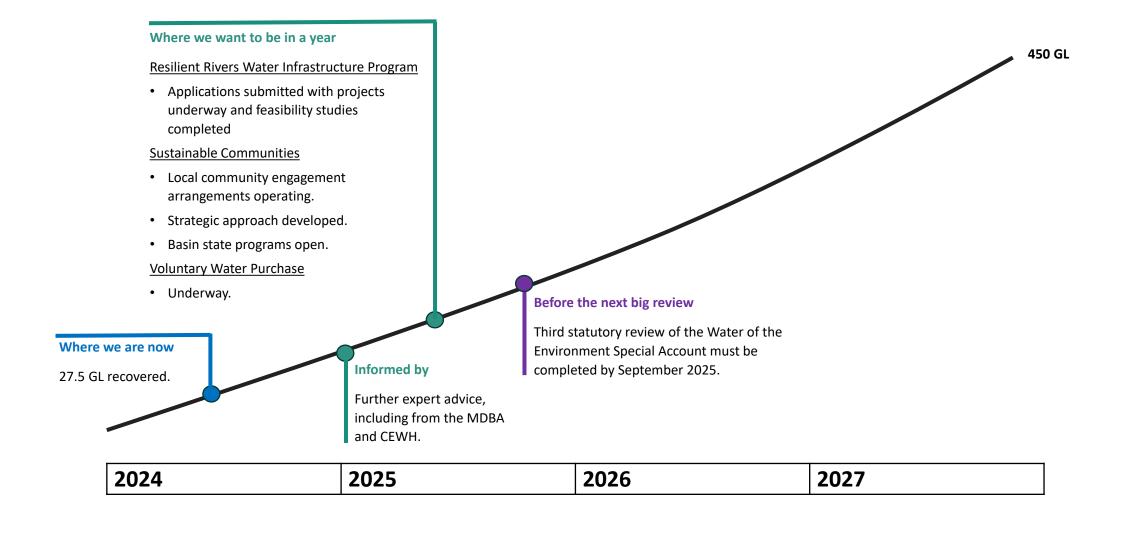
#### The feedback and independent reviews have been clear

• Community adjustment assistance funding up front, to support diversification and resilience, informed by place-based conversations.

#### The Sustainable Communities Program is designed to do this.

- \$300 million to states to support Basin communities + delivery costs from
  1 July 2024 30 June 2028
- To facilitate regional, place-based engagement to develop local initiatives.
- To maximise benefits for communities, states need to leverage other regional development investments, to work closely with local councils and industry and other stakeholders on a strategic approach.

#### Where we want to be



## Check points on the way to December 2027

- Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap: late 2024
- MDBA 450 GL advice: mid 2025
- States to bring forward new supply projects: mid 2025
- Third statutory WESA review: end 2025
  - Funding, program design, effectiveness including Sustainable Communities
- Basin Plan Review: 2026
- Review check point for Sustainable Communities funding: mid 2026
- Reconciliation of Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism: end 2026

