

# Water resource plans – August 2022 quarterly report

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### Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners of the Murray–Darling Basin

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority pays respect to the Traditional Owners and their Nations of the Murray–Darling Basin. We acknowledge their deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to their lands and waters.

The guidance and support received from the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations, the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations and our many Traditional Owner friends and colleagues is very much valued and appreciated.

Aboriginal people should be aware that this publication may contain images, names or quotations of deceased persons.

# Water Resource plan progress

Water resource plans are an integral part of implementing the Basin Plan as they set new rules on how much water can be taken from the system, ensuring sustainable diversion limits are not exceeded over time. They also protect water for the environment, cultural values and uses and water quality.

Basin state governments are responsible for developing water resource plans (WRPs). The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) assists states in developing this material and is responsible for assessing WRPs and making an accreditation recommendation to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for water (the Minister). Ultimately the Minister will make the final decision on WRP accreditation.

The MDBA applies a consistent framework to assess each WRP against Basin Plan requirements and has ensured resources are dedicated to the water planning and assessment task. The MDBA is required to apply and follow the processes set out in the *Water Act 2007* (Cth) (the Act) in undertaking this task.

The MDBA uses a WRP assessment framework that includes a range of policy and guidance materials to support the preparation and accreditation of WRPs. The [WRP assessment framework](#) was published in October 2018 on the MDBA website. In addition, an external provider has been contracted to undertake a process review aimed at providing confidence that due diligence arrangements have been followed and that the assessment recommendation is justified.

Bilateral agreements were established to ensure key elements of WRPs were given effect from 1 July 2019 for states where WRPs were not accredited. In the case of NSW, a renewed [bilateral agreement](#) was agreed with MDBA in June 2021, to ensure new or improved information, methods or models can be applied, through agreement, in particular WRP areas.

## Adapting to future change

Water management will continue to evolve and change over time. The MDBA anticipates amendments to accredited WRPs as a result of new information coming to hand, reviews and changes to state legislation.

The MDBA has established processes to support the assessment and re-accreditation of WRPs consistent with the requirements of the Act. This involves a tailored assessment approach that is suited to the scale and complexity of the amendment. [WRP amendment guidelines](#) have been developed to guide Basin States in the development of amendments and are available on the MDBA website. Regulations are also in place to enable the streamlined accreditation of minor or non-substantive amendments to WRPs. A minor or non-substantive amendment is an amendment that

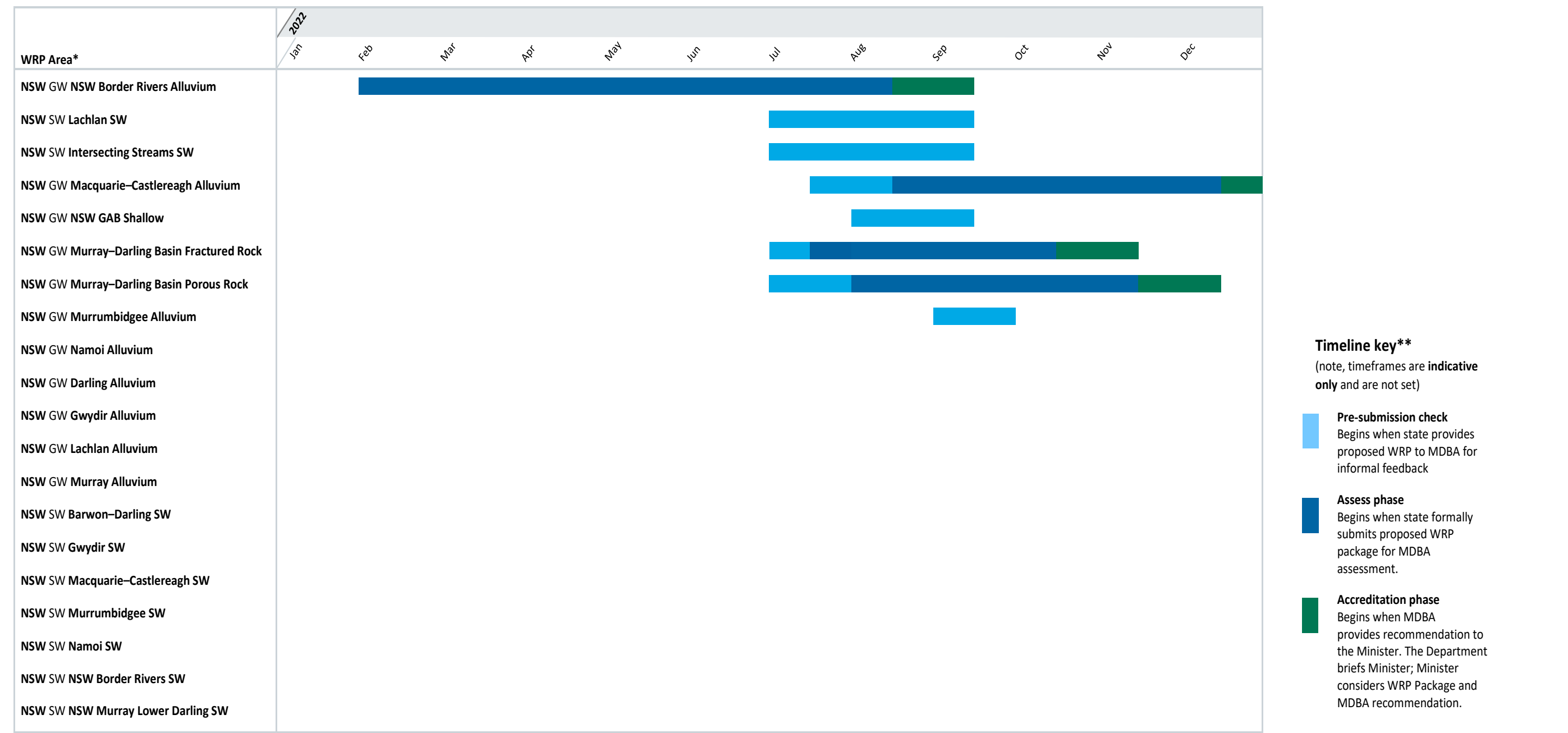
does not alter the substance of the WRP or affect rights or obligations and can include correcting errors of spelling, punctuation or grammar; or updating references to a law.

It is anticipated that Basin states will work closely with the MDBA prior to any amendment being submitted for assessment.

This quarterly report reflects state-by-state progress as at 31 August 2022.

# Water resource plan timeframes

Water resource plan timeframes, as at August 2022



SW = surface water    GW = groundwater  
\* All other state WRPs are accredited and operational. For accreditation timelines see previous quarterly reports.  
\*\* NSW resubmission timeframes are subject to agreement between ministers.

# New South Wales progress update

## Resubmission underway

The MDBA is working with NSW to undertake pre-submission reviews of WRPs prior to WRPs being formally submitted. This step will help to resolve issues with the WRPs prior to formal submission and assessment.

Pre-submission checks have been completed, or are underway, for a number of WRPs and informal feedback is being provided to NSW.

Following informal feedback the following WRPs have been newly submitted and are undergoing assessment:

- NSW Border Rivers Alluvium (groundwater) – submitted 17 February 2022
- Murray–Darling Basin Fractured Rock (groundwater) – submitted 14 July 2022
- Murray–Darling Basin Porous Rock (groundwater) – submitted 28 July 2022
- Macquarie–Castlereagh Alluvium (groundwater) – submitted 18 August 2022

The Lachlan (surface water) WRP was previously submitted on the 31 March 2022 and subsequently withdrawn on 30 June 2022 to undergo revisions. The MDBA continues to work with NSW in the pre-submission checking phase.

Resubmitted WRP packages can be viewed on the MDBA website at

<https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan/water-resource-plans/state-water-resource-plans>

## NSW preparing for resubmission

NSW submitted 20 WRPs to MDBA for assessment by 30 June 2020.

The initial assessment of all NSW WRPs was completed by September 2021. The assessment of these plans identified inconsistencies with Basin Plan requirements. As a result, NSW withdrew all 20 WRPs and advised they will consider the MDBA's assessment feedback.

This is not unexpected. All other Basin States went through a similar process where inconsistencies were identified by the MDBA, to reconsider their policy positions within their WRPs.

The MDBA noted in its recent [Report Card](#) that NSW is behind schedule, and that assessing NSW WRPs is a priority for the MDBA.

The MDBA will assess resubmitted WRPs with the same assessment framework used for all other states.

The work required to complete the assessment is an essential part of implementation of the Basin Plan. Therefore, the MDBA is giving high priority to this work and devoting additional resources to get the task completed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## Operational and accredited water resource plans

There are 33 WRP areas in total, 14 for surface water, 14 for groundwater, as well as 5 that cover both. Thirteen WRPs have been accredited and are operational, including all Queensland, Victorian, ACT and South Australian WRPs. Accredited water resource plans can be viewed on the [MDBA's website](#).

Water resource plan area	Commencement date
<b>Australian Capital Territory</b>	
Australian Capital Territory (surface water)	June 2020
Australian Capital Territory (groundwater)	June 2020
<b>Queensland</b>	
Border Rivers–Moonie (groundwater/surface water)	September 2019
Condamine–Balonne (groundwater/surface water)	September 2019
Warrego–Paroo–Nebine (groundwater/surface water)	June 2017
<b>South Australia</b>	
Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (groundwater/surface water)	November 2019
South Australian Murray Region (groundwater/surface water)	August 2019
South Australian River Murray (surface water)	November 2019
<b>Victoria</b>	
Goulburn–Murray (groundwater)	June 2020
Northern Victoria (surface water)	June 2020
Victorian Murray (surface water)	June 2020
Wimmera–Mallee (groundwater)	September 2019
Wimmera–Mallee (surface water)	September 2019

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**Office locations – First Nations Country**

**Adelaide** – *Kurna*

**Canberra** – *Ngunnawal*

**Goondiwindi** – *Bigambul*


**Griffith** – *Wiradjuri*

**Mildura** – *Latji Latji*

**Murray Bridge** – *Ngarrindjeri*

**Toowoomba** – *Jarowair and Wakka Wakka*

**Wodonga** – *Dhudhuroa*

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