

Water resource plan – December 2018 quarterly report

December 2018

Published by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority
MDBA publication no: 40/18
ISBN (online): 978-1-925762-09-9



GPO Box 1801, Canberra ACT 2601

engagement@mdba.gov.au



1800 230 067



mdba.gov.au

© Murray–Darling Basin Authority 2018

Ownership of intellectual property rights



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the MDBA logo, trademarks and any exempt photographs and graphics (these are identified), this publication is provided under a *Creative Commons Attribution 4.0* licence. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)

The Australian Government acting through the Murray–Darling Basin Authority has exercised due care and skill in preparing and compiling the information and data in this publication. Notwithstanding, the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, its employees and advisers disclaim all liability, including liability for negligence and for any loss, damage, injury, expense or cost incurred by any person as a result of accessing, using or relying upon any of the information or data in this publication to the maximum extent permitted by law.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority's preference is that you attribute this publication (and any Murray–Darling Basin Authority material sourced from it) using the following wording within your work:

Cataloguing data

Title: Water resource plan – December 2018 quarterly report, Murray–Darling Basin Authority Canberra, 2018. CC BY 4.0

Accessibility

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority makes its documents and information available in accessible formats. On some occasions the highly technical nature of the document means that we cannot make some sections fully accessible. If you encounter accessibility problems or the document is in a format that you cannot access, please contact us.

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.

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 the sustainable diversion limit is not exceeded over time.

Basin state governments are developing water resource plans. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) is working cooperatively and effectively with Basin state governments to have all water resource plans (WRPs) accredited in 2019. The Murray–Darling Basin Authority is responsible for assessing WRPs and making a recommendation about WRP accreditation to the Commonwealth minister responsible for water.

To do this, the MDBA uses a sound WRP assessment framework that includes a range of policy and guidance material to support the preparation and accreditation of WRPs. The [WRP assessment framework](#) was published in October 2018 on our website. The MDBA has worked to ensure adequate resources are dedicated to the water planning and assessment task over 2018 and for 2019. Within the MDBA, procedures to ensure a robust process include the provision of training modules to all staff associated with WRPs. An external provider has been contracted to undertake a review process aimed at providing confidence that due process has been followed and that the assessment outcome is justified.

There are 33 WRP areas in total, 19 for surface water, 19 for groundwater including five which cover both. One WRP has been accredited and is currently operational (as at November 2018).

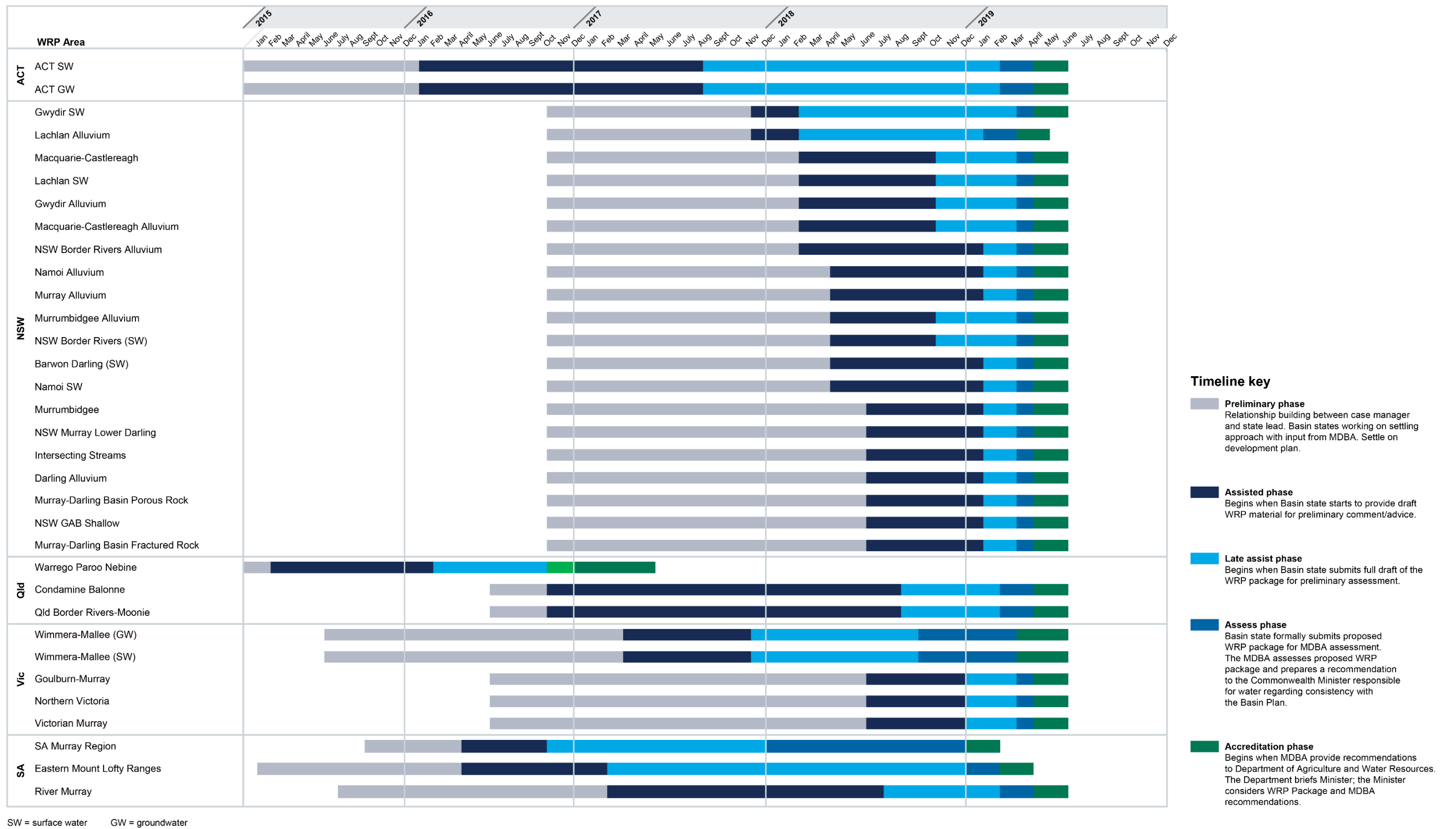
Overall, WRP delivery is behind schedule, particularly in NSW where 20 of the 33 WRPs are being prepared. It is unlikely that NSW will meet the agreed timeframe of 30 June 2019 for accreditation for a number of WRPs. The Commonwealth has commenced contingency planning for late WRPs, which is being progressed through the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council. MDBA is advising Basin States on precautionary steps to manage the potential for any delays to WRP development.

A new regulation has been made under the *Water Act 2007* that sets a timeframe for submission of WRPs to the MDBA and enables the Minister to grant an extension for a Basin State to submit a proposed WRP. In making a decision to grant such an extension beyond 30 June 2019, the Minister may consider evidence provided by Basin States that Sustainable Diversion Limits will take effect from 1 July 2019. Basin States now have the opportunity to apply for an extension using this regulation.

It is likely that the accreditation of WRPs by the Minister will be impacted by the forthcoming Federal election and caretaker period. Similarly the election in Victoria and forthcoming election in NSW impact WRP development and accreditation processes. While these impacts are beyond the control of Basin governments, the risk of delays can be managed by ensuring that Basin States submit final WRPs as early as possible and the MDBA and Department of Agriculture and Water Resources have processes in place to streamline the process of assessment and briefing to the Minister once caretaker concludes.

This Quarterly report reflects State-by-State progress as at 30 November 2018.

Water resource plan timeframes



Note: The WRP timeframes reflect current timeframes as at November 2018. This is an updated approach compared to the MDBA quarterly report in May 2018 which showed project planning timeframes as proposed by Basin state governments in early 2017.

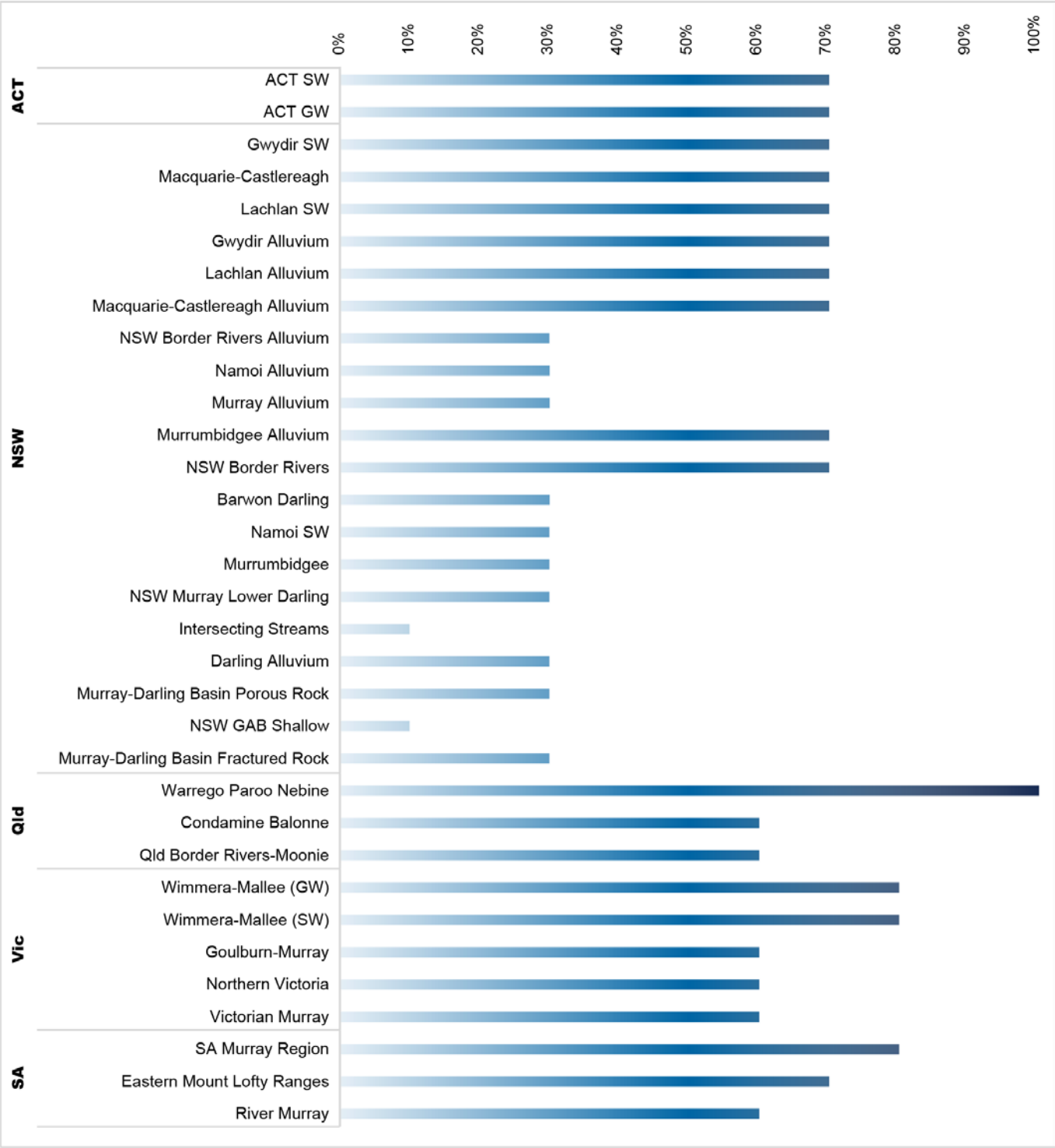
New South Wales is in discussions with the MDBA on managing risks to WRP delivery given some of the delays to date.

For more information about the water resource plan process and accreditation, visit mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans.

Progress of water resource plans from development to accreditation

The progress table indicates the current stage of development for each WRP as at November 2018.

Progress of water resource plans - November 2018



SW = surface water GW = groundwater

% Complete	Water resource plan development stage
0%	Development not yet begun
10%	Preliminary planning begun
20%	Development of plan started
30%	Some early draft material available to the MDBA for review
40–60%	Progress in developing draft material, providing to the MDBA for review, and updating draft material
70%	Complete set of draft material available to the MDBA for review
80%	Final plan submitted to the MDBA for assessment
90%	MDBA recommendation provided to the Minister
100%	Plan accredited

State-by-state progress development report

This report is MDBA's assessment of WRP development as at November 2018.

The tables used in this report show the MDBA's level of confidence that each WRP is progressing to schedule, based on the state's approach and the material provided. Ratings include:



>75% confidence: indicates the state is making good progress



50–75% confidence: indicates the state is making progress



25–50% confidence: indicates the state is making some early progress



<25% confidence: indicates that so far the state has made limited progress.

Australian Capital Territory

Progressing to schedule

2 plans under development

The Australian Capital Territory and the MDBA have worked closely and have now prepared final draft documents for the surface water and groundwater WRPs. Relevant amendments to Australian Capital Territory legislation is progressing and on track to be finalised ahead of incorporation into the draft WRPs in late 2018. The final WRPs are on track to be submitted to the MDBA for assessment in February 2019, and are on track for accreditation by mid-2019.

Options for managing remaining gaps, such as finalisation of the Australian Capital Territory Shared Reduction Amount with New South Wales and the surface water modelling package, are being progressed in a timely way so the outcomes can be reflected in the WRPs in late 2018.

Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
ACT (SW)	70%
ACT (GW)	70%

SW = surface water, GW = groundwater

New South Wales

Behind schedule

20 plans under development

New South Wales is well behind WRP development timelines and it is unlikely that NSW will meet agreed timeframes of 30 June 2019 for accreditation for a number of WRPs. The MDBA remains concerned about the large volume of work that needs to be completed. At this stage MDBA considers that 8 of the 20 NSW WRPs are on track for accreditation by mid-2019.

NSW is investing substantial effort in the water planning task and has made considerable progress since the last quarterly report. The MDBA also acknowledges the high level of cooperation with NSW and continued collaborative approach to progress WRPs including through regular workshops to resolve key issues rapidly.

However, NSW still need to resolve a number of complex policy implementation issues to enable the accreditation of NSW plans. These include floodplain harvesting, the start of SDL accounting, pre-requisite policy measures (PPMs) and the protection of environmental water in the northern NSW catchments. The MDBA recommends that NSW communicates how the complex policy implementation issues are being resolved, to provide certainty to all water users in all WRP Areas.

NSW completed public exhibition of its pilot plans in November – Gwydir surface water and Lachlan Alluvium. The MDBA has provided feedback on a complete package of draft material for the Lachlan Alluvium, and a near-complete package of draft material for the Gwydir surface water. NSW is running public exhibition for another six draft WRPs: Macquarie Castlereagh Alluvium (closed 14 December 2018), Gwydir Alluvium (open until 21 December 2018), Murrumbidgee Alluvium (open until 4 January 2019), Macquarie Castlereagh surface water (open until 1 February 2019), Lachlan surface water (open until 1 February 2019) and NSW Border Rivers (open until 1 February 2019).

Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
Gwydir (SW)	70%
Macquarie-Castlereagh (SW)	70%
Lachlan (SW)	70%
Gwydir Alluvium	70%
Lachlan Alluvium	70%
Macquarie-Castlereagh Alluvium	70%
NSW Border Rivers Alluvium	30%

Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
Namoi Alluvium	30%
Murray Alluvium	30%
Murrumbidgee Alluvium	70%
NSW Border Rivers (SW)	70%
Barwon Darling	30%
Namoi (SW)	30%
Murrumbidgee (SW)	30%
NSW Murray Lower Darling	30%
Intersecting Streams	10%
Darling Alluvium	30%
Murray-Darling Basin Porous Rock	30%
NSW GAB Shallow	10%
Murray-Darling Basin Fractured Rock	30%

SW = surface water

Queensland

Progressing to schedule

1 plan accredited

2 plans under development

Queensland is currently the only state with a fully accredited WRP; the Warrego–Paroo–Nebine.

Queensland's remaining two WRPs, Condamine–Balonne and Queensland Border Rivers–Moonie, are being developed in parallel and scheduled for accreditation in June 2019. Queensland completed stakeholder consultation on draft Healthy Waters Management Plans and draft statutory water plans and supporting documents in mid-2018. Near complete draft WRPs were submitted in August 2018, and the MDBA provided advice on these to Queensland in October 2018. Queensland WRPs appear to be on track for accreditation by mid-2019.

Queensland has reported a minor delay on a review of the modelling for both WRPs. Final WRPs are expected to be ready for assessment by the end of February 2019. The MDBA is continuing to work with Queensland on the progressive development of 'accreditation ready' WRP material. Workshops for the detailed consideration of SDL methods, risk mitigation strategies and index structure are underway.

Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
Warrego–Paroo–Nebine	100%
Condamine–Balonne	70%
Qld Border Rivers–Moonie	70%

Victoria

Progressing to schedule

5 plans under development

Victoria submitted the proposed Wimmera–Mallee surface water and groundwater WRPs to the MDBA for assessment on 29 June 2018. Advice from the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations, supported by both the MDBA and Victoria, will see more detailed Aboriginal consultation be undertaken for these plan areas. The additional consultation is expected to be completed in December 2018, and be included in the amended WRPs in February 2019. The Wimmera-Mallee appear to be on track for accreditation by mid-2019.

The remaining Victorian WRP areas will be submitted as a single package called ‘Victoria’s North and Murray WRP’, with a full draft to be completed in consultation with the MDBA by the end of 2018, and final submission in April 2019. Victoria is actively developing the first draft of this WRP package, and is scheduled to complete this ahead of public consultation in early-2019. A detailed work plan for development of the North and Murray WRP package has been provided to the MDBA. Despite this work, the tight timeframes on WRP development means there is no room for slippage and a need for quality WRPs to be brought forward in April 2019. While the MDBA is working closely with Victoria to ensure policy issues are worked through and quality WRPs are being developed, a small risk remains that the North and Murray WRP package may not be accredited by 30 June 2019.

Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
Wimmera-Mallee (GW)	80%
Wimmera-Mallee (SW)	80%
Goulburn-Murray	60%
Northern Victoria	60%
Victorian Murray	60%

SW = surface water, GW = groundwater

South Australia

Progressing to schedule

3 plans under development

South Australia submitted its pilot WRP (South Australia Murray Region) for assessment and accreditation on 8 January 2018. Minor adjustments were made to the WRP and a revised version was submitted to the MDBA on 13 November 2018.

South Australia provided the MDBA with a first draft of the River Murray WRP for review in July 2018. South Australia completed public consultation on its state Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray in September 2018, which will form an important part of the SA River Murray WRP.


South Australia submitted a final draft of the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges WRP to MDBA in October 2018. Formal submission of this WRP is anticipated in December 2018. South Australia and the MDBA are in regular contact to ensure that the concurrent development of the South Australian WRPs will result in the remaining WRPs being delivered on time.


South Australian WRPs are on track for accreditation by mid-2019.


Water resource plan	Percentage of confidence plan is progressing to schedule
SA Murray Region	90%
Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges	70%
River Murray	60%

Office locations

Adelaide
Albury–Wodonga
Canberra
Goondiwindi
Toowoomba

 mdba.gov.au

 1800 230 067

 engagement@mdba.gov.au