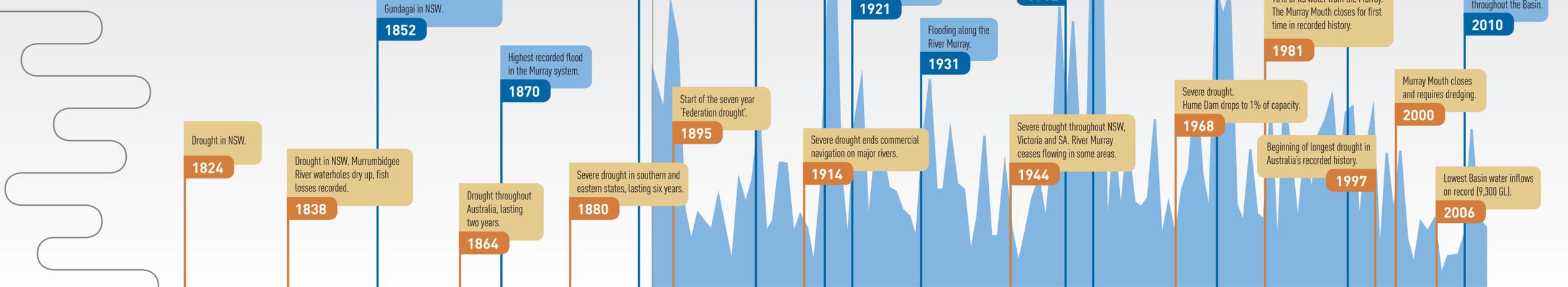


A path to water reform: Timeline of water resource management in the Murray-Darling Basin



< 45,000 BP 1820s 1830s 1840s 1850s 1860s 1870s 1880s 1890s 1900s 1910s 1920s 1930s 1940s 1950s 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s 2000s 2010s

Aboriginal heritage

The lands within the Murray-Darling Basin provided Aboriginal Nations with a rich and abundant source of food, water and shelter. Belief in spiritual beings gave special meaning to the plants, animals, land and water in the Basin.

Many Aboriginal creation stories describe the rainbow serpent as the creator of the rivers, streams and waterholes. Known by many names, the serpent moved across the land, carving the landscape with its long and powerful body. The rainbow serpent now moves into the river from its resting places in nearby waterholes and billabongs to cleanse the rivers and its people.

Aboriginal connection to ancestral lands continues today and is conveyed through stories, totems and law.

Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the Basin dates to more than 45,000 years BP (before present).

Construction

- 1850s**: First pastoral leases established on the Murray. Paddle steamers begin to navigate the Murray and Darling Rivers. First irrigation pumping schemes established on the Murray.
- 1863**: Intercolonial conference agrees to develop navigation on major rivers.
- 1883**: Construction begins on Torrumbidgee system to divert water from the Murray into Victorian irrigation areas.
- 1887**: Chaffey brothers establish irrigation settlements at Renmark (SA) and Mildura (Vic).
- 1891**: Goulburn weir completed – the first major water diversion structure built for irrigation.
- 1897**: First (and only) lock and weir built on the Darling River at Bourke (NSW).
- 1902**: Major conference at Corowa to resolve competition between states for River Murray water.
- 1914**: NSW, Victoria and SA sign River Murray Waters Agreement.
- 1917**: River Murray Commission established to enforce 1914 agreement and ensure water shares are delivered.
- 1917**: Soldier's settlement (farming) schemes established on the River Murray.
- 1922**: Lock 1 on the River Murray completed (13 more built by 1939).
- 1928**: Lake Victoria completed, improving water supply reliability for SA.
- 1936**: Hume Dam completed after 17 years of construction.
- 1939**: Yarrawonga weir on the Murray completed. Barrages constructed to prevent seawater from entering the Lower Lakes in SA.
- 1946**: Soldier's settlement (farming) schemes recommence along the Murray.
- 1955**: Eildon weir completed, creating Victoria's second largest dam.
- 1967**: Burrendong Dam on the Macquarie River completed.
- 1968**: Menindee Lakes water storage scheme completed. First salt interception scheme completed at Barr Creek in Victoria.
- 1974**: Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme completed.
- 1979**: Dartmouth Dam in Victoria is completed, becoming the Basin's largest water storage.
- 2003**: Construction completed on the fishway at Lock 8, the first as part of the Sea-to-Hume Fishway program.
- 2007**: Construction starts on environmental water structures for The Living Murray program.
- 2013**: Construction completed on the final BSMS salt interception scheme at Murtho in South Australia.
- 2014**: Construction completed on the Sea-to-Hume Fishway program.

Management and policy

- 1887**: Conflict between colonies about the threat to river navigation in SA caused by upstream water diversion.
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Interim Cap on water diversion introduced to prevent increase of water diversions. 1995 Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) group is formed. 1998

New Murray-Darling Basin Agreement replaces River Murray Water Agreement. 1992

Salinity and Drainage Strategy adopted by Ministerial Council. 1989

Murray-Darling Basin Agreement first signed, initially as an amendment to the River Murray Waters Agreement of 1914. 1987

South Australia freezes irrigation entitlements. River Murray Commission begins first detailed study of irrigation, drainage & salinity. 1967

South Australia introduces cap on water diversions. 1968

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Basin Plan becomes law. 2012

Northern MD-Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) group formed. 2010

National Water Initiative signed by all governments. The Living Murray First Step signed by Basin state governments. 2004

Water Act 2007 introduced. 2007

MDBA formed. M-DB Agreement becomes part of the Water Act 2007. 2008

Basin Salinity and Management Strategy (BSMS) adopted. 2002