

Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism—Technical workshop outcomes

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) has convened the first **technical workshop** to discuss the rollout of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism supply projects. The inaugural workshop, held on 28 June 2018 in Canberra, involved approximately 50 people including peak interest groups, experts and Basin government officials.

History and next steps of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism

Contextual information was provided to participants on the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism including how the mechanism worked, the timeline and steps for how projects were developed, nominated and assessed.

The Basin Plan provides the MDBA with the option to undertake a reconciliation of the 2017 adjustment to sustainable diversion limits, if needed. If needed, the MDBA will undertake reconciliation using a method agreed by all Basin governments. To make this decision, the MDBA will continue to play a key role in monitoring the integrity of the operation of the adjustment mechanism and will use an adaptive management approach, running from 2018 through to 2024. Under this approach the MDBA will evaluate, verify and publically report on project implementation progress. The reconciliation process will identify where underperforming projects might need to be offset by improvements in other projects to achieve the expected environmental outcomes. This work will also provide an early indication of whether the MDBA is likely to undertake a reconciliation to further adjust sustainable diversion limits at a catchment level in 2024.

The Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism modelling approach was presented by the MDBA and participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions. Questions and comments covered the Basin Plan's limits of change, model assumptions and baseline and the role of the modelling. [Presentations](#) are available on the MDBA website.

Independent reviewers audited the process used by Basin governments to assess the package of SDL Adjustment Mechanism supply projects. Two of the Independent reviewers presented to the group on their findings. They noted that MDBA gave them full access to the model, staff and information to perform their Audit. The review, conducted by an independent panel, found:

- the assessment process has been applied rigorously by the MDBA
- the MDBA administered the assessment framework, designed in collaboration with Basin governments, in line with the legislative requirements as outlined in the Basin Plan
- all Basin governments had the opportunity to identify issues and hold each other to account throughout the process
- there is an agreement that all projects must resolve any issues and actions identified by Basin governments.

All the [independent reviews](#) of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism process including the [slides used by the independent reviewers](#) at the Technical Workshop are on the MDBA's website.

Supply project presentations

Each state jurisdiction presented more information on their projects, with the aim of providing information on project refinement, community consultation and the roll-out of the projects. The [notification documents](#) for each supply measure project are now available on the MDBA website.

Basin state governments are responsible for delivering the supply projects, including consulting with communities on detailed design and implementation. Each project is different and will be designed and implemented in customised ways. The package of measures includes projects at varying stages of development, some finished, some underway, whilst others are in the early stages of development.

It was acknowledged by participants that community input, along with technical knowledge and on-the-ground practicalities, mean these projects will adapt and change over time. Projects will continue to evolve from the business cases originally submitted by Basin state governments.

[Presentations](#) are available on the MDBA website.

Feedback will guide future technical workshops and engagement

Workshop participants were invited to help identify the scope, purpose and approach to future technical workshops.

Participant feedback noted that it was important to continue to have workshops or other mechanisms for:

- open and transparent information exchange about the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism package as a whole. This can create opportunities to building shared understanding and information exchange in particular on design and implementation of supply projects, including risks, opportunities and how the MDBA will be monitoring and evaluating project performance going forward.
- identifying issues and/or opportunities regarding implementation of the package and provision of technical advice that could be drawn on to scope response options. This might also include discussions on how to ensure adaptive management of these projects and water management in general.

A key theme in the feedback was the importance of identifying what success would look like and establishing robust and objective process for ongoing monitoring and reporting and an approach to reconciliation of the package.

Technical workshops could help provide feedback on the lines of evidence being used, how performance can be tracked and reported and generally build confidence on the implementation of the projects and the outcomes they are achieving.

There were a range of ideas shared around how input could be gathered and how future workshops could be run, which the MDBA will use to shape future engagement and the next workshop.

For example, feedback was provided on how often workshops should be held, their format and expertise that might be valuable for different themes.

Participants highlighted two other areas that needed to be included in the broader implementation of the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism projects:

- there is a need to consider how all Basin governments will consistently engage and involve Aboriginal people in the implementation of these projects, and
- even though communication and engagement will be conducted on a project by project level, there would be value in a central and coordinated approach to communication and engagement. This might include improved access to information on roles and responsibilities and where to find information and how to get involved.

Next steps

This is just the start of the process—Basin state governments have until 2024 to complete the projects. To complement this workshop Basin state governments will continue to work with communities, industries and experts on project design and implementation.

The MDBA will establish transparent reporting processes to communicate to Basin governments and communities on the progress of individual projects and the package of projects as a whole. In doing so, it will consider how best to obtain input from stakeholders including whether there would be value in hosting further workshops before the end of this calendar year.