



Merbein community

In interpreting this information, it is important to understand that there are many drivers of the socio-economic trends reflected in the data. Therefore, the socioeconomic changes outlined here cannot simply be attributed to the Basin Plan – it is just one of a number of factors that affect communities.

This information should be read in conjunction with *Understanding change in Basin communities* on the Southern Basin community profiles page at mdba.gov.au.

Total surface water entitlements available in Merbein prior to Basin Plan water recovery was 30.3 GL. 6.2 GL (20.5% of available water) was recovered up to October 2016. 6.1 GL was recovered through purchase (of which 77% was purchased up to June 2011). 0.1 GL was recovered through on-farm infrastructure investment. The net reduction in water available for production is 6.1 GL (20% of available water).

Trends in social and economic conditions

AREA POPULATION

Increased from 3,581 to 3,732 persons (4.2%) between 2001 and 2016

- Mostly between 2011 and 2016

WORKFORCE

Total area workforce

Decreased from 1,250 to 1,112 FTE (11%) between 2001 and 2016

- Mostly between 2011 and 2016
- Workforce participation fell from 34.9 to 29.8 FTE per 100 persons

Agricultural workforce

Decreased 41% (150 FTE) between 2001 and 2016

- Half of the decrease occurred between 2001 and 2006
- Employment in irrigated production decreased 50.4% (constant decrease across time)

Agricultural manufacturing workforce

Decreased 69% (104 FTE) between 2001 and 2016

- Mostly between 2006 and 2011

Non-agriculture private workforce

Decreased 4.2% (22 FTE) between 2001 and 2016

- Increasing 8.1% between 2001 and 2011, decreasing 12.3% between 2011 and 2016

Government services workforce

Increased 45.5% (95 FTE) between 2001 and 2016

- Increasing 49.9% between 2001 and 2011, decreasing 4.4% between 2011 and 2016

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Percentage FTE in key sectors:

- **2001:** 29% agriculture, 42% non-agriculture private, 17% government services
- **2016:** 19% agriculture, 45% non-agriculture private, 27% government services

TOWN POPULATION

Increased from 1,822 to 1,984 persons (8.9%) between 2001 and 2016

- Mostly between 2001 and 2006

53% of the town population was 45 and over in 2016, up from 40% in 2001

- 43% increase in 45 years and over, 14% decrease in under 45s

EMPLOYMENT

Full-time employment

20% of town population in 2016
down from 22% in 2001

Part-time employment

Constant around 12% to 13% of
town population

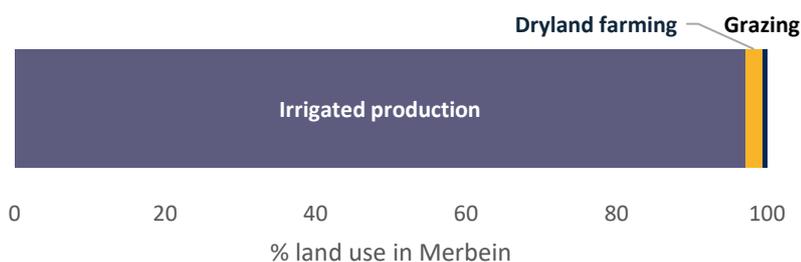
Unemployment in the town

Constant around 3% to 4% of
town population

SEIFA FOR TOWN: (DECILE RANKINGS)

- **2001:** disadvantage = 2, advantage/disadvantage = 2, wealth = 4, education = 1
- **2016:** disadvantage = 2, advantage/disadvantage = 2, wealth = 2, education = 2

Land use



Water recovery programs

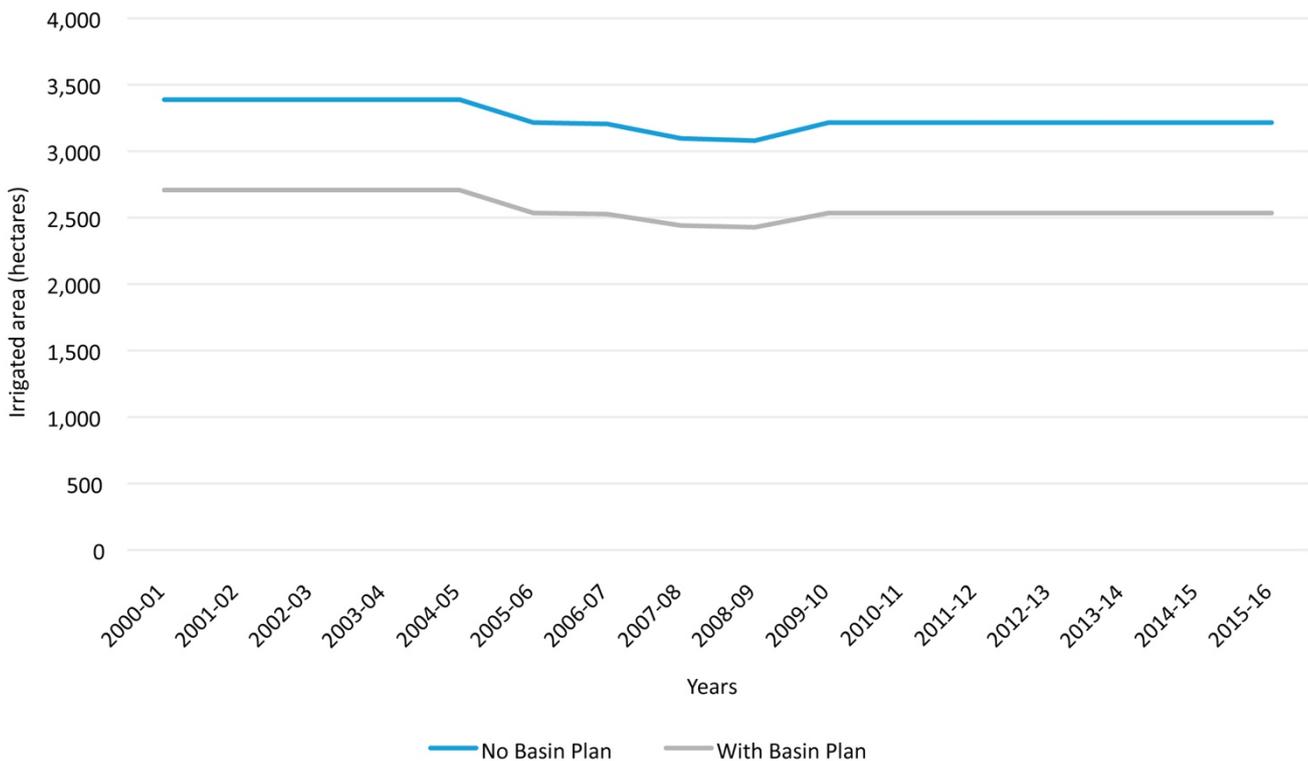
Water purchase occurred between 2010 and 2013. The largest portion of water was recovered in 2010.

Infrastructure water recovery occurred through rounds 3 and 4 of the On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency program.

Basin Plan impact on irrigated agriculture

The main irrigated crop is grape production, with relatively small areas of citrus, fruit, nuts and vegetables. Grape production includes table grape, dried fruit and wine grape production. Basin Plan water recovery has contributed to the area of irrigation declining by approximately 20% to 21%. Most of the reduction in area is associated with grape production, together with the area of citrus being halved. Decisions to leave these two industries would have been influenced by the prices growers were receiving for their products, particularly for the outputs supplied to the dried fruit, wine grape and citrus sectors at the time of the Basin Plan water recovery, as well as the effects of the millennium drought on irrigation business viability.

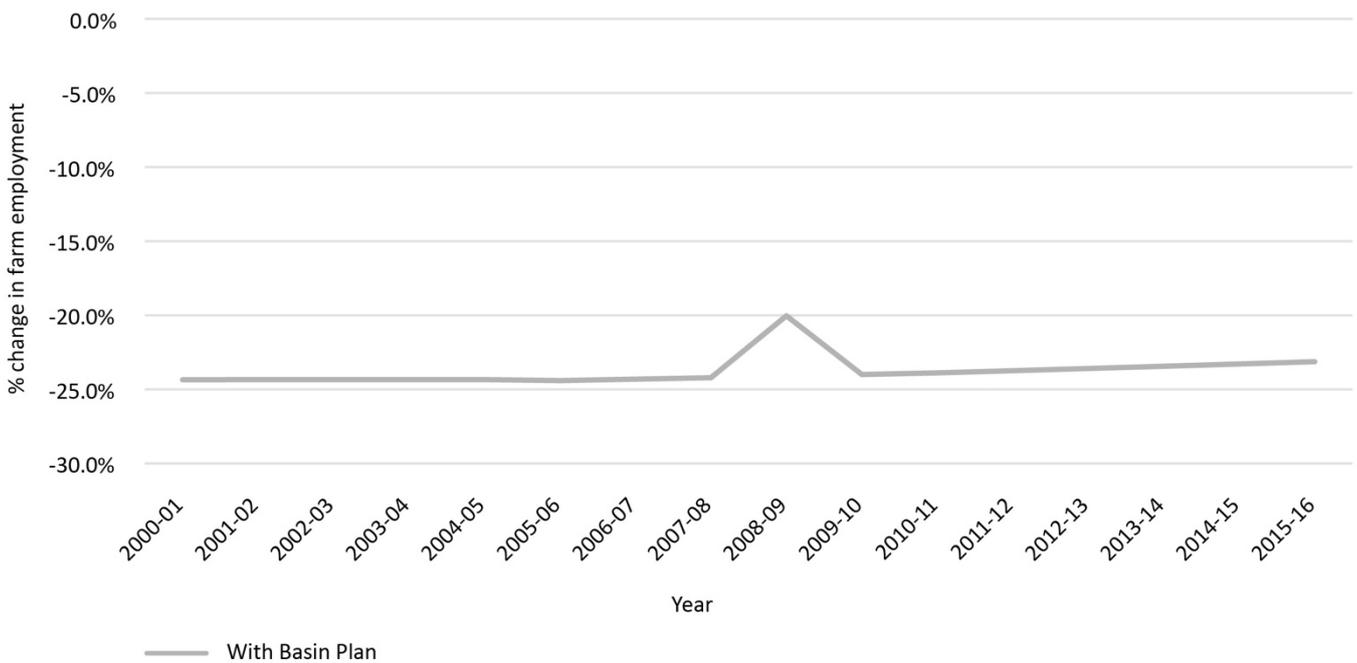
Area of irrigated production (hectares) 2001–16



Basin Plan impact on farm sector

In 2001, farm employment was approximately 180 FTE (including seasonal workers). Farm employment fell by around 66% between 2001–16. Non-Basin Plan factors led to 42% of this change, while Basin Plan water recovery is estimated to have contributed the remaining 24%.

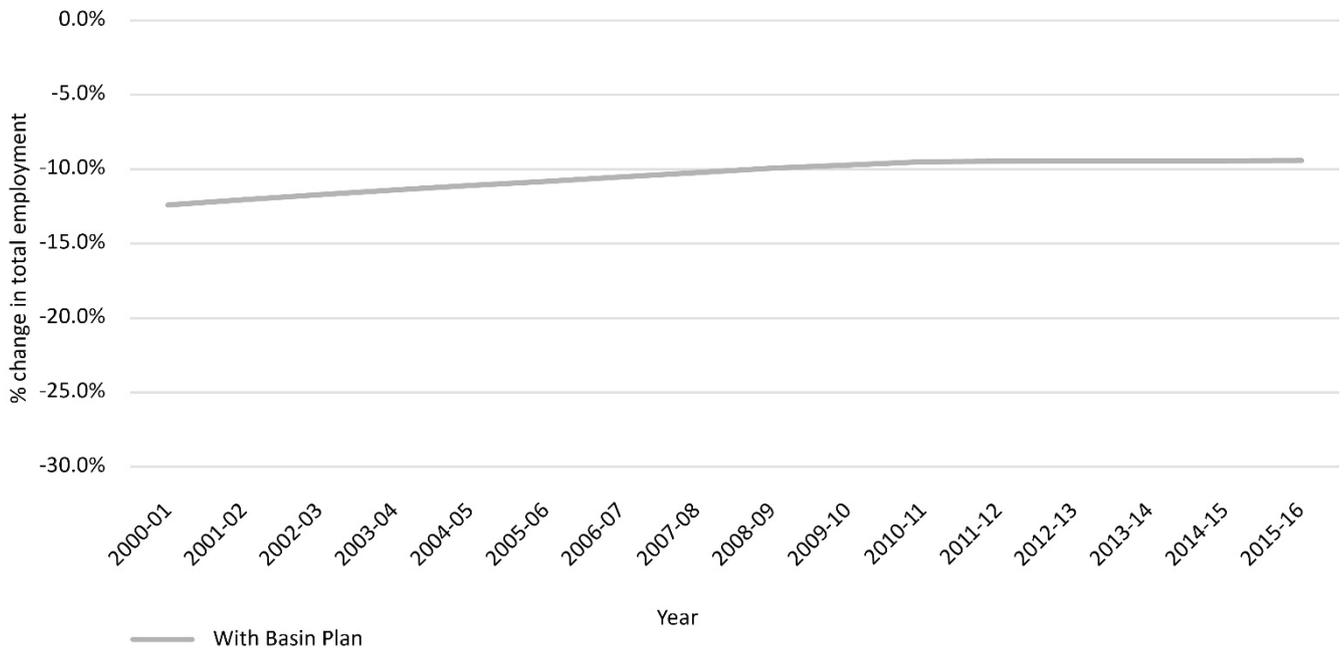
Effect of Basin Plan on farm employment 2001–16



Basin Plan impact on total employment

In 2001, total employment was approximately 1,360 FTE (including seasonal workers). Total employment fell by around 11% between 2001–16. Modelling suggests the Basin Plan water recovery has led to most of this change. Given the prevailing social and economic conditions at the time of the water recovery and the trends of social and economic change affecting the community (including the particular challenges for grape producers), it is possible the modelling results might over-estimate the effect of Basin Plan water recovery.

Effect of Basin Plan on total employment 2001–16



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