

# New South Wales – Darling Alluvium

Formal submission submitted to the MDBA: 9 April 2019

**Disclaimer:** *New South Wales (NSW) formally submitted the proposed Darling Alluvium water resource plan (proposed WRP) package to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA) under the Water Act 2007 (Cth). At the time of publication, a recommendation on accreditation has not yet been made by the MDBA to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for water. The proposed WRP is not operational. The publication of the proposed WRP on the MDBA’s website is to enable transparency.*



The Darling Alluvium water resource plan (WRP) area (GW7) covers groundwater within alluvial deposits of the upper and lower reaches of the Darling, Paroo and Warrego Rivers. The Lower Darling extends from south of Wilcannia to the state border at Wentworth. The Upper Darling extends between Bourke and Wilcannia and along the Warrego and Paroo Rivers from the state border to their confluence with the Darling River.

This WRP area supports significant/high value Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) including wetlands, vegetation and baseflow ecosystems.

**Water resources:** The WRP area applies to the alluvial and groundwater sources in the area and encompasses two SDL resource units the Lower Darling Alluvium and the Upper Darling Alluvium.

**Towns and regions:** Bourke, Wilcannia, Menindee, Wanaaring, Engonnia, Wentworth.

**Water users:** Town water supply, domestic and stock, as well as grazing and agriculture (including cotton).

For more detailed maps, including the boundaries of water resource plan areas as defined by the Basin Plan and the names of the Traditional Owners within each area (noting there is a degree of overlap between some WRP areas and Nation boundaries) please visit this website:

<https://www.mdba.gov.au/publications/maps-spatial-data>

## About water resource plans

Water resource plans are an integral part of implementing the Basin Plan.

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 is working closely with Basin state governments to ensure water resource plans meet the requirements of the Basin Plan.

There are 33 water resource plans in total, covering groundwater and surface water management across the Basin. Water resource plans to be completed by states include:

- twenty in New South Wales
- five in Victoria
- three in Queensland
- three in South Australia, and
- two in the Australian Capital Territory.

## Next steps

The MDBA is currently assessing the Darling Alluvium WRP for consistency with the Basin Plan.

The Authority will then consider the assessment and provide a recommendation to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for water that will inform the decision regarding accreditation.



For more information on water resource plans, visit: [www.mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans](http://www.mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans)

For more information on the Darling Alluvium water resource plan, visit <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-resource-plans/drafts>

**Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners** – *In the spirit of strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal people the MDBA acknowledges the cultural authority of the Traditional Owners in the Murray–Darling Basin*

## How the WRP was developed

New South Wales (NSW) has been developing this WRP since 2017 with the first draft received by the MDBA in 2019.

This WRP brings together new and existing rules and arrangements used by NSW to manage alluvial groundwater in the Darling Alluvium WRP area. This includes creating the *Water Sharing Plan for the Darling Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*. This new Water Sharing Plan establishes the rules for water sharing in the Darling River Alluvial SDL resource units, replacing the relevant provisions contained in the *Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2012*, the *Water Sharing Plan for the Intersecting Streams Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2011*, and the *Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated and Alluvial Water Sources 2011*.

Public consultation informed the development of the state plan, and that consultation underpins the WRP. The NSW Government has worked with the relevant Traditional Owners to identify their objectives and outcomes for water resource management to help improve the protection of Aboriginal values and uses in the WRP area.

In assessing the WRP, the MDBA will seek advice from Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) and Murray-Lower Darling Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN).

## Regional details

The Darling Alluvium WRP area either overlies, borders with or underlies the following WRP areas: NSW MDB Porous Rock (GW6), NSW MDB Fractured Rock (GW11), NSW Great Artesian Basin Shallow (GW13), and Warrego-Paroo-Nebine (GW22), the New South Wales Murray and Lower Darling (SW8), Barwon-Darling Watercourse (SW12), Intersecting Streams (SW13).

The WRP area is dominated by GDE communities of numerous woodland wetland types, and chenopod shrublands. These communities have characterisations of endangered ecological communities, Ramsar and Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia (DIWA) wetlands (Paroo Wetlands and associated Menindee wetlands), extensive connected riparian corridors and Basin target vegetation species of black box, lignum and river red gums.

## Addressing risks

The NSW approach to managing water resources requires the identification and assessment of risks to the condition and ongoing availability of water resources and the assessment of existing management strategies and the need for new management strategies. The WRP risk assessment outlines the risks and management strategies in the Darling Alluvium WRP area.

Risks to the WRP area include ensuring the ongoing structural integrity of the aquifer, the health of GDEs due to poor water quality and ensuring water availability.

In assessing the WRP, the MDBA will consider the risk management arrangements NSW has put forward for accreditation to protect the water resources of the WRP area, including other water resources with significant hydrological connections to the Darling Alluvium WRP area water sources. For more information about these risks visit: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan-roll-out/water-resource-plans/common-challenges-across-water-resource-plans>

Water for the environment must be protected in law to at least the same level as was in place prior to the commencement of the Basin Plan in 2012. The MDBA's assessment will ensure the WRP does not reduce the net level of protection of water for the environment that was available at that time.

## Further information

WRPs complement existing arrangements for water use at the state level. More information about these arrangements can be found at the links below:

*Darling Alluvium WRP Schedule A - Water Sharing Plan for the Darling Alluvial Groundwater Sources 2020*

*Water Management Act 2000:*

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2000/92>

Water Security for Regions Program:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/infrastructure-programs/water-security-for-regions>

### Office locations

Adelaide, Albury-Wodonga, Canberra, Goondiwindi, Griffith, Mildura, Murray Bridge, Toowoomba

 [mdba.gov.au](https://www.mdba.gov.au)  1800 230 067

 [engagement@mdba.gov.au](mailto:engagement@mdba.gov.au)



Australian Government

