

South Australia - Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges

Formal submission received by the MDBA: 26 February 2019

Disclaimer: South Australia (SA) formally submitted the proposed Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges 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 Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (EMLR) WRP area covers 3,588km² and is located at the south western margin of the Murray–Darling Basin in South Australia (SA). The area's boundaries are the ridgeline of the Mount Lofty Ranges in the west, and the River Murray and Lake Alexandrina in the east.

Water resources: The WRP covers groundwater and surface water for the area. Watercourses in the area gain water from run-off in the hills then drain across the plains towards Lake Alexandrina and the River Murray. The area contributes approximately 0.5% of the Murray–Darling Basin's total annual runoff.

Towns and regions: Mount Barker, Strathalbyn, Nairne

Water uses: cropping, grazing, irrigated horticulture and pasture production, conservation, urban water, industrial uses

For more detailed maps please visit (please note: some plans overlap):

<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 state include:

- 20 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 SA Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges 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 to accredit the WRP or not.



For more information on water resource plans, visit: www.mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans

For more information on the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges water resource plan, visit: the [Government of South Australia Department for Environment and Water website](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au)

How the WRP was developed

SA has been developing this WRP since 2016.

The Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges WRP was received by the MDBA in February 2019. The WRP is being assessed by the MDBA, which includes seeking advice from the Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations.

The WRP brings together existing rules and arrangements used by SA to manage water in the EMLR area. This includes the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan; and the Marne Saunders Water Allocation Plan.

Public consultation informed the development of these Water Allocation Plans, and that consultation underpins the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges WRP.

The SA Government worked with Aboriginal Nations in the EMLR area to build cultural values and objectives in to the Water Allocations Plans in this region. EMLR Aboriginal Nations were also engaged during the development of the WRP to identify objectives and outcomes for water resource planning and management.

Regional details

The EMLR WRP area is a seasonally flowing, unregulated system. Water is taken for consumptive use from thousands of privately managed farm dams, watercourse diversions and bores.

The area includes a range of important water-dependent ecosystems, including the only Basin occurrence of the Fleurieu Peninsula Swamps, recognised as a critically endangered ecological community. The EMLR WRP area flows into the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar Wetland site, creating unique habitats at the interface, and providing River Murray species access to flowing stream habitats in the EMLR catchments.

Water is shared with consumptive users and the environment via an integrated system of planned environmental water that considers interactions between surface water and groundwater, and the needs of local ecosystems and those in connected areas such as the Ramsar site.

Addressing risks

In assessing the WRP, the MDBA will consider the management arrangements put forward for accreditation to protect environmental assets in this WRP area as well as the effects on connected water resources such as the Ramsar wetland site.

Water for the environment must be protected to at least the same level as was in place prior to the Basin Plan. The MDBA's assessment will check that the WRP ensures that there is no reduction in the protection of water for the environment.

Arrangements to address other risks will be assessed in the WRP. Some risks include: connectivity, water quality, climate change and water use (which is measured by Baseline diversion limits). 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>

Additional information

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

Water Allocation Plans:

<https://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin/water/water-allocation-plans>

Natural Resources Management Act 2004:

<http://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/LZ/C/A/Natural%20Resources%20Management%20Act%202004.aspx>

Office locations

Adelaide, Albury–Wodonga, Canberra, Goondiwindi, Toowoomba

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

 1800 230 067

 engagement@mdba.gov.au



Australian Government

