

# Goulburn-Murray

Formal submission to the MDBA: 26 April 2019

**Disclaimer:** Victoria has formally submitted the proposed Goulburn-Murray water resource plan, the Northern Victoria water resource plan and the Victorian Murray water resource plan as a combined package called Victoria's North and Murray Water Resource Plan (proposed WRP) 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 Goulburn-Murray WRP area includes bedrock aquifers of the mountains, high plains and valley sides in the south and east to the alluvial aquifer systems and underlying bedrock in the valleys, on the floodplains and along the Murray.

**Water resources:** The proposed WRP applies to the groundwater of the Goulburn-Murray WRP area<sup>1</sup>. The surface water of this area is covered by two surface water WRP areas; the Victorian Murray WRP area and the Northern Victoria WRP area.

**Towns and regions:** Swan Hill, Wodonga, Bendigo, Benalla, Echuca, Shepparton and Wangaratta.

**Water users:** agriculture, domestic and stock use, urban supplies and commercial use.

**Population (2016 census):** 500,500

<sup>1</sup> Note: the Goulburn-Murray water resource plan area is set out by the Basin Plan for managing groundwater resources, and is distinct from the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District that is defined by the Victorian government and draws water from a mixture of surface water resources.

For more detailed maps please visit (please note: some plan areas 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 proposed 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 proposed WRP or not.



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 Goulburn-Murray water resource plan, visit: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/compliance/water-resource-plans>

## How the WRP was developed

Victoria's North and Murray WRP is the proposed WRP that Victoria has developed as an integrated package which includes the Goulburn-Murray WRP area, the Northern Victoria WRP area and the Victorian Murray WRP area.

In 2014, a review of the sustainable diversion limit for the Goulburn-Murray: Sedimentary Plain SDL resource unit found that the long-term environmentally sustainable diversion limit could be increased as long as Victoria enforced specific local management rules.

Victoria has been developing the proposed WRP since 2017. Public consultation informed and underpinned the proposed WRP package and was conducted by the Victorian Government between 23 January and 18 March 2019.

The Victorian Government has also conducted focused engagement with Traditional Owners of the Victoria's North and Murray WRP area.

## Regional details

Average annual groundwater use in the Goulburn-Murray WRP area is currently less than 40% of the total volume of licences, and in the middle of the drought in 2006–07 use peaked at 51%. Even including estimated domestic and stock use, total annual groundwater use is still well below Basin Plan sustainable diversion limits.

Groundwater in the Goulburn-Murray WRP area is found in shallow and deep aquifers that vary in character and connectivity, including significant connectivity with adjacent surface and groundwater systems.

The Goulburn-Murray groundwater resource supports a significant amount of agricultural activity and commercial operations. The fresh water provides urban supplies and is an essential source for domestic and stock water supply. It is also an important environmental asset that provides base flow to streams and supports wetlands and other ecosystems that depend on groundwater.

Some shallow aquifers across the floodplain are saline and a threat to productivity and natural assets. These are managed through pumping to restrict aquifer water levels from rising and bringing more salt to the surface.

## Addressing risks

Victoria has recently developed the State Environment Protection Policy (Waters) to guide water quality management in Victoria and improve the protection of Victoria's waterways and groundwater.

One of the key significant connections between surface water and groundwater resources occurs in the Upper Ovens River water supply protection area. The importance of continued conjunctive management of these resources through the management plan for this water supply protection area is recognised in the proposed WRP.

Arrangements to address other risks will be assessed in the proposed WRP package, including arrangements for extreme events, risks to social, recreational and Aboriginal use and water quality. For more information on issues common across many WRPs in the Basin, including water use (measured by baseline diversion limits), climate change and connectivity, visit: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-resource-plans>.

## Further information

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

Water for Victoria:

<https://www.water.vic.gov.au/water-for-victoria>

Water Act 1989 (VIC):

[http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web\\_Notes/LDMS/LTObject\\_Store/ltobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/736A6089BA268855CA25829D00198BB7/\\$FILE/89-80aa124%20authorised.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/Web_Notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/ltobjst10.nsf/DDE300B846EED9C7CA257616000A3571/736A6089BA268855CA25829D00198BB7/$FILE/89-80aa124%20authorised.pdf)

State Environment Protection Policy (Waters):

<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/about-us/legislation/water-legislation/water-related-policies>

Victorian Environmental Water Holder:

<http://www.vewh.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Water Register:

<http://waterregister.vic.gov.au/>

### Office locations

Adelaide, Albury–Wodonga, Canberra, Goondiwindi, Toowoomba

 [mdba.gov.au](http://mdba.gov.au)

 1800 230 067

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



Australian Government



MURRAY-DARLING  
BASIN AUTHORITY