

Victoria – Wimmera-Mallee (Surface water) WRP, and Wimmera-Mallee (Groundwater) WRP

Formal submission received by the MDBA: 26 February 2019

*Disclaimer: Victoria formally submitted the proposed Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) water resource plan and the Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater) water resource plan as a combined package (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 two proposed WRPs are not operational.** The publication of the two proposed WRPs on the MDBA's website is to enable transparency.*



This fact sheet covers two Water Resource Plan areas: Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) and Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater).

The Wimmera-Mallee surface water and groundwater WRPs cover an area of approximately 30,000km² or 10% of Victoria. The area extends from the Grampians National Park in the south to Lake Albury, near Rainbow. The Wimmera River is the largest Victorian river that does not flow into the sea, but instead flows into a series of terminal lakes, principally Lake Hindmarsh and Lake Albury.

Water resources: The Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) WRP covers the surface water for the area and the Wimmera-Mallee (groundwater) WRP covers the groundwater for the area.

Towns and regions: Horsham, Stawell, Dimboola, Warracknabeal, Ouyen and St Arnaud.

Water users: urban, industrial and rural water, recreation, environment.

Population: ~60 000

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 Wimmera-Mallee surface water and groundwater WRPs 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 WRPs or not.



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

For more information on the Wimmera-Mallee (Surface Water) water resource plan, visit <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/compliance/water-resource-plans>

How the WRP was developed

Victoria has been developing the Wimmera-Mallee proposed WRP package since 2016. The surface water and the groundwater WRPs have been packaged together into the same document, and progressed together.

The Wimmera-Mallee proposed WRP package was originally submitted on 29 June 2018. In the six weeks following, the proposed WRP package was assessed by the MDBA, which included seeking advice from the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations. Following further consultation with Traditional Owners, the WRP package was withdrawn and resubmitted on 22 February 2019.

Public consultation informed and underpins the Victorian Government's proposed WRP package.

The Victorian Government has committed to consultation with Traditional Owners and continues to work with the Traditional Owners in the Wimmera-Mallee region.

Regional details

The Wimmera-Mallee region is disconnected from the broader Murray-Darling Basin, with the major rivers of the area terminating in a series of lakes. The region is dominated by dryland broadacre agriculture and livestock production. A small amount of irrigation supports pasture production and some horticulture. Water is important for maintaining local natural environments as tourism destinations.

The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project replaced 17,500 km of open channels with 9,159 km of pipeline in one of the largest water infrastructure projects in Australia, recovering an annual average volume of 83 GL of water for additional river flows (modelled using historical data) and 1 GL for wetlands for the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, and securing continuous water supply for the region.

The groundwater resources of the West Wimmera Groundwater Management Area are excluded from this WRP area due to limited hydrologically connectivity to the rest of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Addressing risks

The Living Murray Icon Sites of Lindsay, Mulcra, Walpolla Islands, and Hattah Lakes, are within the WRP area. However, the management of these sites is addressed in the separate Victoria's North and Murray WRP package as they are not connected to the water resources of the Wimmera-Mallee. Victoria's North and Murray WRP package will be assessed separately to ensure it contains adequate protections for water for Living Murray Icon Sites in line with Basin Plan requirements.

In the absence of planned environmental water, the Wimmera-Mallee (surface water) WRP identifies the role 'system water' plays in contributing to environmental outcomes. In recognition of the uncertainties of the contribution of this water, the MDBA has highlighted assurances in the WRP to report on and manage this water to provide for environmental outcomes.

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: 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 at 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)

Victorian Water Register:

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

Office locations

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