



Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy

Fact Sheet 3

Sharing water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin

The Murray-Darling Basin generates about 40 per cent of the nation's agricultural income. For Victoria, the Basin is the hub of irrigation, and a key factor in the Northern Region's social fabric and ongoing prosperity.

The Victorian Government has long been committed to the health of the Basin, and has implemented many measures over the past 12 years to help combat the ravages of drought and water extraction, including targeted environmental watering.

The Commonwealth Government now has more powers and a greater role to play in Murray-Darling Basin water management, including setting new limits on how much water can be taken from the Basin's river and groundwater systems and purchasing up to \$3.1 billion of water entitlements.

The Victorian Government supports the Commonwealth's aim of protecting key environmental values in the Murray-Darling Basin, and believes the aim of protecting key environmental values in the Basin can be achieved while securing the rights of existing entitlement-holders.

Key actions to safeguard our future

Victoria and the Commonwealth have a shared objective to get the River Murray sustainable, while maintaining a vibrant future for our irrigation community.

- Victoria will work with the Commonwealth to integrate the Commonwealth's \$3.1 billion water purchase program with investment in modernised irrigation infrastructure and on farm initiatives
- we will negotiate with the Commonwealth to protect existing water entitlements, and clarify roles and responsibilities in Basin water management
- the Strategy will improve water-sharing arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement, including advocating the establishment of a River Murray operating reserve to ensure river operations during droughts.

Victoria will encourage the Commonwealth Government to achieve a better result for the environment through:

- more water for the environment that reflects environmental need
- structural works to improve delivery of environmental water
- aligning environmental water use with complementary measures such as revegetation, stock fencing and habitat protection (see fact sheet 7)
- the establishment of common criteria to guide the use of environmental water.

What happens if we do nothing – a future with less water

Traditional water sharing arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement have not worked well under extremely dry conditions. If there were no change to the way the water was managed, there would be an unacceptable risk of insufficient water in some years to operate the River Murray – even to deliver critical human needs.