

WRP Fact Sheet 6

Sustainable Diversion Limits

Victoria's water resource plans:

The Basin Plan prescribed sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) as a maximum volume of water that can be taken from Basin resources for consumption.

Sustainable diversion limits

The long-term annual average water use across the Murray-Darling Basin before the development of the Basin Plan is known as the baseline diversion limit (BDL).

Sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) are prescribed in the Basin Plan as the amount of water that can be taken for consumptive use from 1 July 2019.

The difference between the BDL and SDL represents volume of water that Basin States must recover for the environment. Recovered water is used to improve the environmental health of the Murray-Darling Basin's rivers, wetlands and floodplains, and the habitats of plants and animals that rely on the river system. Victoria is only required to recover surface water. Further information is available at <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/achievements-murray-darling-basin-plan>

Consumptive limits and recovery of water are specified for particular systems, termed as *SDL resource units*.

From 1 July 2019 Victoria must comply with the sustainable diversion limits.

Water resource plans (WRPs) are required to detail how Victoria will comply with SDLs for each SDL resource unit and for each *form of take*.

Surface water forms of take

Surface water SDLs are provided in the WRPs for different forms of take. Forms of take are the different ways consumptive water users can divert surface water from the Murray-Darling Basin. In Victoria the following forms of take are accounted for:

Take from a regulated river (excluding basic rights)

This is take from a river that has its water regulated via release from dam or weir. This take is permitted under a bulk entitlement or section 51 licence for take and use.



Take from a watercourse (excluding basic rights)



This form of take also captures take from regulated rivers but may include some take from unregulated rivers. For example, in the Victorian

Murray system, the model estimates take from all regulated rivers, but also includes some estimates from unregulated rivers.

Take from a watercourse or regulated river under basic rights

This form of take is permitted under basic rights, for domestic and stock and Traditional Owner purposes. Take can be from a regulated or unregulated river.



Net take by commercial plantations



This form of take considers the net difference between take by commercial plantations (for example, almond plantations and forestry) before European settlement to 2019 conditions, by considering changes in evapotranspiration.

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Take by runoff dams (excluding basic rights)

This form of take covers all take by section 51 take and use licences for dams located off waterways.



Take by runoff dams under basic rights

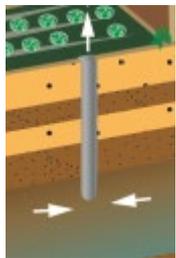
This form of take also covers take from dams off waterways, but only those used for domestic and stock purpose (i.e. under a basic rights).

Floodplain harvesting is another type of take in the Murray-Darling Basin, but there are no instances of this occurring in Victoria's WRP areas.

Further explanation of take and use of water in the WRP areas can be found on DELWPs website: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/mdbp/water-resource-plans>

Groundwater forms of take

Groundwater sustainable diversion limits are provided in the WRPs for different forms of take. In Victoria the following forms of take are accounted for:



Take from an aquifer (excluding basic rights)

This form of take requires a take and use licence and a works licence. The works licence regulates the construction, use, maintenance and alteration of the bore used to extract groundwater. The take and use licence

authorises the maximum volume the user is permitted to take in a year, the place of take and the time and rate of take. Licensed groundwater take is limited by permissible consumptive volumes (PCV) set by the Minister for Water.

Take from an aquifer under basic rights

Bores on private land can be used under a basic right for domestic and stock or Traditional Owner purposes.

Compliance with SDLs

WRPs identify how Victoria will determine what is permitted to be taken in a year to ensure compliance with the relevant SDL.

At the end of each financial year, Victoria must report to the MDBA:

- The volume that was permitted to be taken from the system during that year in accordance with the method provided in the relevant WRP
- The volume that was actually taken from the system during that year in accordance with the method provided in the relevant WRP

The methods for how annual actual and permitted take are determined are outlined in Appendix C of Victoria's North and Murray WRP and the Wimmera-Mallee WRP.

The difference between the two volumes will identify whether, year to year, Victoria is complying with its SDLs for a particular SDL resource unit.

Where actual take exceeds permitted take, there are mechanisms under Victoria's WRP in response to section 10.11 of the Basin Plan to address any excess take.

The total volume of excess actual take must not reach or exceed a volume that is 20% of the total volume of the relevant SDL. If this occurs a number of actions should occur to determine the cause – see MDBA compliance framework: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/basin-plan-roll-out/basin-wide-compliance-review/sustainable-diversion-limit-reporting-compliance>.

Appendix C of Victoria's North and Murray WRP and the Wimmera-Mallee WRP outline further information relating to sustainable diversion limits: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/mdb/mdbp/water-resource-plans>

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