

The Broken

Planning our Basin future together



The Victorian Government recognises that a healthy Murray-Darling river system benefits everyone. We remain committed to delivering positive outcomes for agriculture, the environment, Traditional Owners and regional communities through best practice water and waterway management.

Victoria is working with communities to find better ways to deliver further water recovery. We are seeking your feedback on how and when regional water recovery projects are developed.

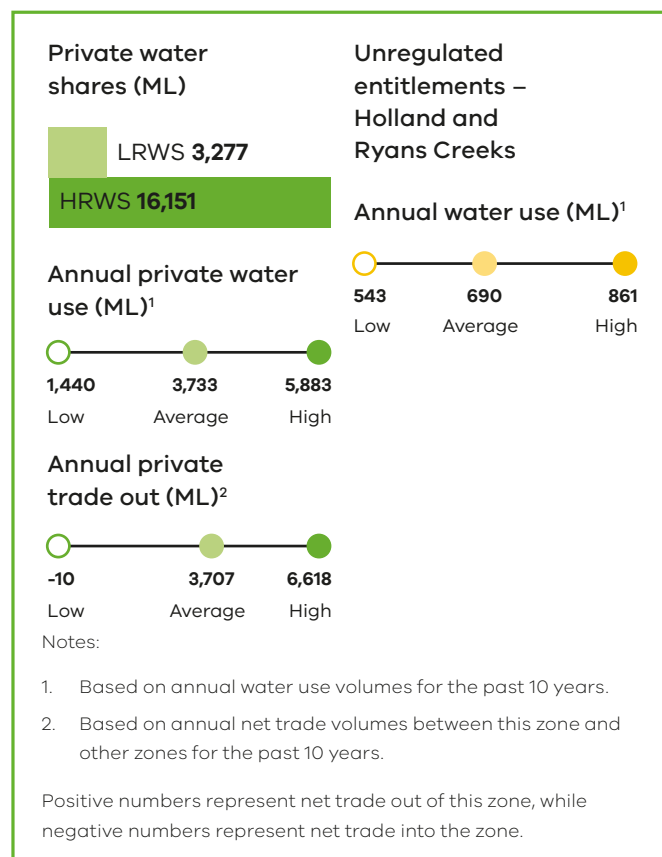
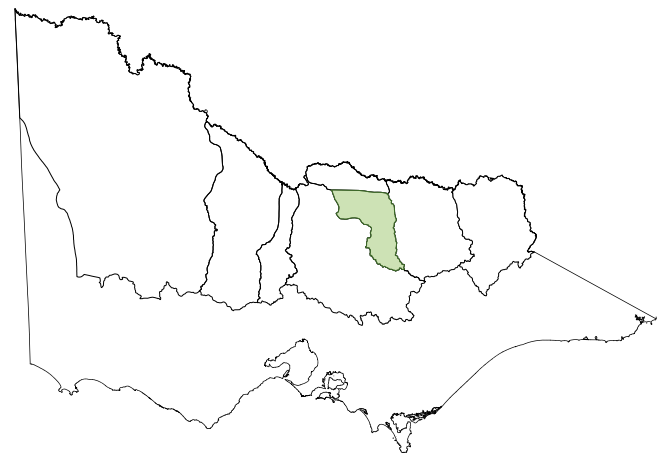
Irrigated agriculture

The Broken system is the regulated part of the Broken Basin in north-eastern Victoria. Water entitlements, water use and trade information for the Broken is summarised in the box below.

Irrigated agriculture in the Broken contributes to approximately \$366 million of annual agricultural production value. Livestock grazing (non-dairy) and cropping are the main irrigated land uses.

Inflows into the Broken have declined significantly and are expected to decline further due to a drying climate.

The Broken Reconfiguration Feasibility Study began in 2023 to support the community to plan for reduced water availability in the long term. The study is investigating options to reconfigure the system. The study follows the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan in 2009 to restore Winton Wetlands. The lake was previously used for irrigation supply.



Environmental values

The Broken River originates in the Australian Alps but mainly flows across a flat landscape before merging with the Goulburn River. Its wetlands are listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia, with much of the high-quality native vegetation along the river set aside as natural features reserves. The river has one of the best examples of healthy in-stream vegetation in a lowland river in the region.

The Broken River supports a diverse fish community, including Murray cod, Macquarie perch, golden perch, silver perch, river blackfish, mountain galaxias, southern pygmy perch and Murray-Darling rainbowfish. The river also supports a large platypus population and numerous threatened species, including bolga, Australasian bittern, buloke and ridged watermilfoil.

Responding to change

Changes made to the Basin Plan in December 2023 mean the Commonwealth Government has greater ability to purchase water entitlements. Up to one and a half Sydney Harbours (750 GL) could be recovered across the Basin. An open tender water purchase program will have negative impacts for communities that depend on irrigation.

The Victorian Government's focus is delivering its legislative requirements under the Basin Plan.

We will continue to look at works and measures which achieve these outcomes and work with the Commonwealth to get them recognised.

We will also look to minimise the impact of Commonwealth purchases in Victoria by working with communities to find ways to recover water while improving environmental outcomes and the long-term sustainability of communities in these regions.

You can read about this in the 'Planning our Basin future together' prospectus and fact sheet, available at www.water.vic.gov.au/our-programs/murray-darling-basin/planning-our-basin-future-together.

A system approach to water recovery

The Broken System Reconfiguration Study is currently underway and involves looking at the potential for a reduced irrigation footprint. However, Victoria's long-term commitment to water recovery means that many large-scale projects to increase water efficiency and modernise infrastructure have already been done.

This means we need to take a system approach when considering options for further water recovery. This will allow us to minimise the impacts of water purchase, plan for the long-term sustainability of our irrigation communities and achieve better environmental outcomes.

Potential water recovery opportunities

Taking an integrated approach to water recovery in the Broken could include:

- Reducing local delivery losses
- Water purchases that consider where people live, how they are supplied, the impact on other users and opportunities to get additional system savings
- Changes to system operations

These opportunities also have the potential to deliver better environmental outcomes:

- The change in irrigation supply to some reaches may support a more natural local flow
- Delivery of more environmental flows to different parts of the system, such as low flows and freshes
- Restoration of fish passage due to system changes

These ideas are a conversation starter with regional communities.

We will also be partnering with Traditional Owners to find opportunities to progress self-determination in water access and management.

Working together

In light of the Commonwealth Government's position on open tender water purchases, the Victorian Government will work with communities on how and when we will deliver water recovery, and the process to develop and deliver projects to support this.

This work will require extensive community engagement and planning and the Victorian Government will seek funding from the Commonwealth Government to support this.



Credit (above): Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Credit (in title): Agriculture Victoria

Having a say

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) alongside water corporations and catchment management authorities, will be talking to communities about Victoria's approach.

You are also welcome to make comments on the prospectus and approach. Submissions can be made via Engage Victoria: engage.vic.gov.au.

Contact us at rural.water@delwp.vic.gov.au.