

The Goulburn

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 Goulburn includes the Central Goulburn area within the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District. Water entitlements and water use information for the Goulburn is summarised in the box below.

Irrigated agriculture in the Goulburn contributes to approximately \$1.2 billion of annual agricultural production value. The main irrigated land uses are dairy, cropping, and livestock grazing (non-dairy).

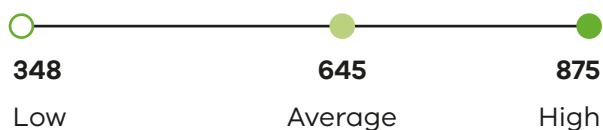
Significant irrigation modernisation in this area has been achieved through the successful delivery of the Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) Connections Project (completed 2020) which recovered 429 GL of water for irrigators, urban water users and the environment. An additional 15.9 GL of water recovery will be delivered through the GMW Water Efficiency Project.

Private water shares (GL)

LRWS 422

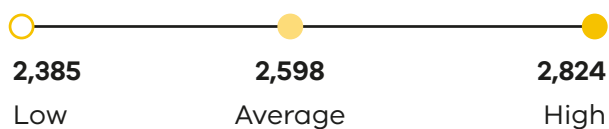
HRWS 745

Annual private water use (GL)¹



Unregulated tributary entitlements

Annual water use between Lake Eildon and Goulburn Weir (ML)¹

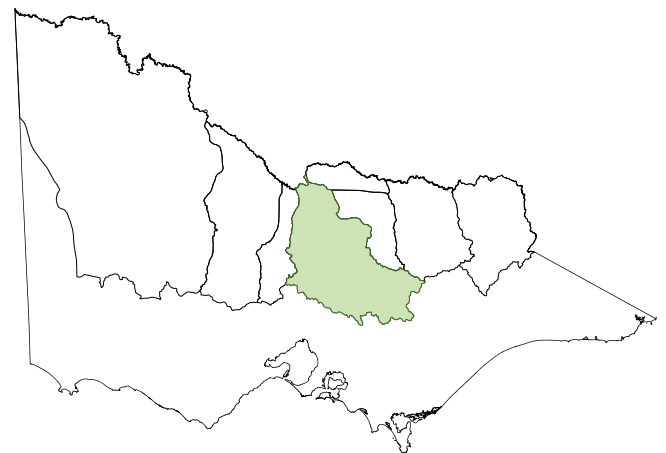


Annual water use downstream of Goulburn Weir (ML)¹



Notes:

1. Based on annual water use volumes for the past 10 years.



Environmental values

The Goulburn River flows for 570km, from the Great Dividing Range to the Murray River, with middle reaches designated as Heritage River. Along its length, the river supports many protected and vulnerable species and habitats. The surrounding catchment has many wetlands that are formally recognised for their conservation significance, including Doctors Swamp, Gaynor Swamp, Kanyapella Basin, Loch Garry and Reedy Swamp.

The river and its tributaries support diverse native fish, including large Murray cod, golden perch, silver perch, trout cod, freshwater catfish and one of the last remaining Macquarie perch populations in the Murray-Darling Basin. The river also supports a strong population of platypus, turtles, frogs and rakali.

River red gums are a dominant feature along the river, with intact patches of forest on floodplains. These trees provide roosting and feeding habitat for waterbirds including the threatened eastern great egret, herons and cormorants. Endangered Australasian bittern use the river as a breeding and feeding site.

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

Victoria's long-term commitment to water recovery means that large-scale projects to increase water efficiency and modernise infrastructure have already been done in this region through the GMW Connections Project and the GMW Water Efficiency Project.

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 Goulburn could include:

- Rationalisation of irrigation infrastructure where it aligns with strategic plans and enables local transition
- Water purchases that consider where people live, how they are supplied, the impact on other users and opportunities to get additional system savings
- Reducing local delivery losses and making 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
- Reconsideration of supplements from the Loddon and Campaspe systems may support environmental outcomes across multiple systems
- The change in system operations may support a more natural flow and the delivery of complementary measures

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.

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.

Credit (in title): Goulburn Broken Catchment Management

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