



Australian Government

The role of the Murray–Darling river system

The Murray–Darling Basin (the Basin) is Australia’s largest river system, spanning across most of New South Wales, some of southern Queensland, the east of South Australia, northern Victoria and all of the Australian Capital Territory.

Communities across the country rely on the rivers, including:



the more than 2.3 million Australians living in the Basin



8,400 irrigated agriculture businesses



50 First Nations whose culture is intertwined with the Basin.

Water from the river system:

- provides clean drinking water
- supports the production of food for Australians
- attracts visitors from across Australia and the world, with tourism earning around \$15 billion each year
- makes recreational outdoor activities possible like boating, water skiing, fishing and kayaking
- creates a flourishing environment for plants, animals and people.

Our Australian plants and animals are also dependent on water from the Murray–Darling rivers.

The Basin is home to many unique and iconic animals, plants and environments including:

- 16 internationally significant wetlands
- more than 50 endangered species
- 120 different species of waterbirds
- 50 native fish species
- millions of trees, some of which are hundreds of years old.

Increased water usage, droughts, and man-made changes to how the rivers flow have led to many of the Basin’s rivers and wetlands being degraded. This is also affecting recreation, tourism and communities that rely on the Basin’s water.

Water is essential in creating a flourishing environment for plants, animals and people. Waterbird populations have declined over the past 40 years and we are not seeing consistent recovery in their populations. Native fish populations have also declined by more than 90% in the past 150 years.

If we act now, we can ensure the Murray–Darling rivers continue to support local communities, and sustain people, plants and animals.



Find out how the Australian Government’s plan will restore the Murray–Darling rivers: murraydarling.gov.au