



Australian Government

Commonwealth Environmental Water Office

Goulburn environmental water

Management

August 2018

Management of environmental water in the Goulburn catchment

Background, August 2018

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder oversees the management and use of a large portfolio of water for the benefit of the environment. This water is the result of the Australian government's suite of national water reforms including the modernisation of irrigation infrastructure, as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

In Victoria, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder makes water available for delivery by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, in consultation with Goulburn Murray Water – the local river operator.

Commonwealth environmental water is being used to maintain the ecological health and resilience of Victoria's river systems by providing in-channel freshes and baseflows (as seasonally appropriate) that improve the condition and survival of native vegetation and maintain suitable habitat for native birds, fish and other biota. Meanwhile, return flows support downstream actions throughout the Mid-Murray, Lower Murray, Coorong and Lower Lakes.

Current water supply

After detailed consideration of the conditions locally in the Goulburn and across the southern Murray Darling Basin, there is enough water available (including through 74 GL of carryover from 2017–18 and 134 GL of new annual allocations against the Commonwealth's entitlements in the Goulburn) to meet environmental needs.

Another consideration factored into this assessment is the high likelihood of operational deliveries meeting some of Goulburn-Broken environmental demands. This information was sourced from [Goulburn-Murray Water's publically available information on the potential for future Inter-Valley trade transfers](#) from the Goulburn to the Murray.

Outcomes in 2017-18

Environmental water use in the Goulburn River over successive years has benefitted the environment. The timing and volume of environmental water has aided the establishment of plants on the lower and mid banks of the river. Re-instating variable flows has created opportunities for migration and reproduction of native fish in the lower Goulburn.

Monitoring in 2017–18 identified spawning of trout cod at a range of sites in the lower Goulburn for the first time in a decade, alongside high numbers of silver and golden perch. There was increased vegetation growth along the riverbank, however higher than usual summer flows diminished the extent of outcomes on lower sections of the bank.

Primary environmental targets in 2018-19

In 2018–19, the aim is to consolidate the outcomes that have been achieved in the Goulburn-Broken Catchment over previous years. Key targets are to:

- improve habitat by generating new growth of native plants and boosting the resilience of aquatic and riparian vegetation to support riverbank stabilisation; and
- contribute to year round variable baseflows and seasonal freshes that support habitat, food sources and increased movement and survival of native fish.