

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan

WHY THE MURRAY RIVER MATTERS



CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Murray-Darling is located on the ancestral lands and waters of more than 40 First Nations and contains numerous culturally significant sites and wetlands.



BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

More than 50 native fish, 85 mammal species, 367 native and migratory bird species, frogs, lizards, turtles, insects and many other animals, trees and plants call the Murray-Darling home.



INTERNATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT

Sixteen wetlands are internationally recognised for their contribution to global biodiversity.

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST RIVER SYSTEM

The Murray-Darling Basin stretches thousands of kilometres across south-eastern Australia – a vast network of winding rivers, lakes, billabongs and wetlands.

It's our biggest river system, but also one of our most vulnerable. For decades, too much water has been taken from the river for big irrigation and industry and climate change is making these impacts worse. After decades of mismanagement, the Murray-Darling is on the brink of collapse.

WHAT IS THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN?

The Basin Plan is a national framework to share water across the Murray-Darling Basin and make sure there is enough for rivers and wetlands.

Under the *Water Act 2007*, the Basin Plan sets legal limits on how much water can be taken from the Basin each year so there is enough for rivers and wetlands. It includes a target to recover 3,200 billion litres of water for the environment.

YOUR CHANCE TO SHAPE THESE LAWS IN 2026

In 2026, the Basin Plan will undergo a formal review, as required by law.

The review will assess whether the Basin Plan is working for communities and the environment, and understand areas it's fallen short. It will also help shape what the next iteration of the Basin Plan looks like.

Key areas the review will consider are:

- **First Nations water rights and participation:** how well the plan supports cultural and economic outcomes for First Nations communities and how First Nations people are involved in water decision-making
- **Climate risks:** how climate change is affecting the Basin and how water management should respond
- **How effective the plan has been:** how well the plan is meeting its environmental and social goals, such as the amount of water actually recovered for the environment.

WHY YOUR VOICE MATTERS

The Basin Plan review is a key moment to push for reforms that make water use more fair and sustainable. On the table is a stronger Basin Plan – one that's guided by law and science, and puts healthy rivers and people first.

When consultation opens (expected early 2026), there will be significant moments where you can have your say, including through submissions.

Learn more here: <https://envirojustice.org.au/what-is-the-murray-darling-basin-plan/>

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Cultural heritage - Zac Edmonds
Internationally significant - Vince Russell