2014 State Report Card

How much of our wastewater and stormwater is recycled?

Water is one of our most precious natural resources. It is fundamental to life and supports our economy, lifestyle and environment. With population expected to increase and rainfall projected to decrease across southern Australia due to climate change, it is critical we use our water wisely.

Recycling water reduces pressure on our traditional freshwater resources such as reservoirs, the River Murray and groundwater. Wastewater and stormwater can be treated – fit for purpose – for use in industry, watering parks and gardens, and agriculture – the biggest consumer of water in South Australia. Recycling water also provides a number of environmental benefits. It decreases the amount of sediment, nutrients and pollutants going into waterways, leaves more water for our native plants and animals and provides wetland habitats in urban areas.

This report card summarises most of the water that is recycled around the state. This report card covers the amount of wastewater recycled from treatment plants managed by SA Water and Trility Pty Ltd and the amount of stormwater recycled in the greater Adelaide region. Some local councils and private businesses recycle additional water, but these are relatively small amounts and are not included in this report card.

Regional trends in the amount of water recycled

State target

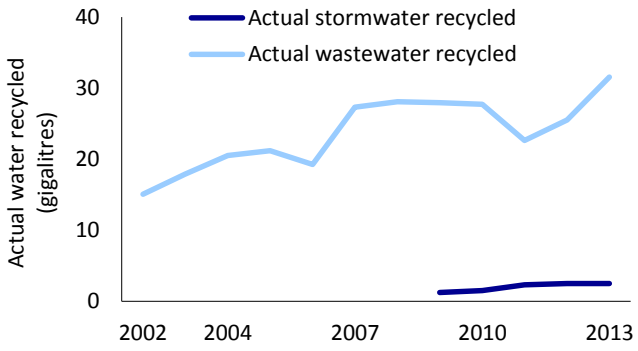
Maintain the productive capacity of our natural resources

Trend (2009-13)	Getting better	The recycling of wastewater and stormwater is increasing

The amounts of wastewater and stormwater recycled are increasing. In 2013, we recycled more water than ever before (graph on right).

The amount of wastewater recycled each year is influenced by rainfall patterns and the demand for recycled water. For example, in a wet year farmers may not use as much recycled water because their needs are met from the rain and their water allocations. For example, when the drought broke in 2011 the amount of wastewater recycled declined (graph on right).

The amount of stormwater that can be recycled is also related to rainfall. Stormwater is only available following rainfall events, but if the rainfall is too intense our capacity to store it limits the amount that can be recycled.



Where we are at (2013)	Good	In total, over 34 gigalitres of wastewater and stormwater were recycled

In 2013, a total of 31.6 gigalitres (or billion litres) of wastewater was recycled across the state by SA Water and Trility Pty Ltd, and a total of 2.5 gigalitres of stormwater was recycled in greater Adelaide.

The amount of water recycled is influenced by demand and rainfall, but it is also limited by the capacity. The Government of South Australia has set targets to increase our recycling capacity to 50 gigalitres of wastewater and 35 gigalitres of stormwater by 2025.

The Government of South Australia, NRM boards, local councils and private businesses have met and exceeded the wastewater recycling capacity target by updating treatment plants and installing pipes to deliver recycled water to users. We are also making progress to meeting our stormwater recycling capacity targets by developing stormwater harvesting wetlands to pump stormwater into underground aquifers when it rains. Some of these schemes are not at full capacity.

Reliability of information	★★★★☆	Very good

Further information:
Technical information for this report card, Information on stormwater and wastewater recycling in South Australia

This report is a work in progress. As resource monitoring improves, so too will our ability to describe trends in condition.

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Government of South Australia