

# Surface water

## Quantity and quality

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018



STATEWIDE



Trend  
**Getting worse**



Condition  
**Fair**



Reliability  
**Very good**

### Trend

**Annual streamflows (quantity) in the state's prescribed surface water resource areas over the past 30 years indicate a declining trend. Water salinity (quality) varies with streamflow, but trends are considered to be within natural ranges.**

This assessment is of the quality and quantity of surface water in actively managed surface water areas (top figure). The River Murray is excluded and reported on in a separate assessment.

Over the past 30 years, declining trends in streamflow have been observed throughout the prescribed surface water areas of South Australia. In 12 of the past 15 years, streamflows across the state were less than the 30-year average (bottom figure).

Salinity typically varies annually with streamflow, and is influenced by rainfall and evaporation. The salinity trends across the prescribed areas are considered to be within the natural range.

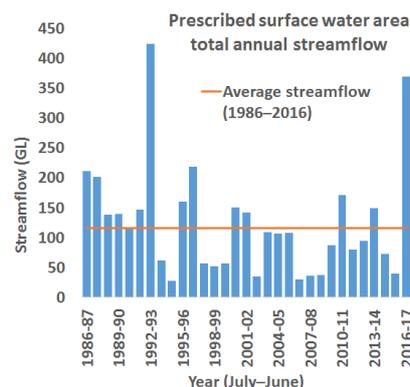
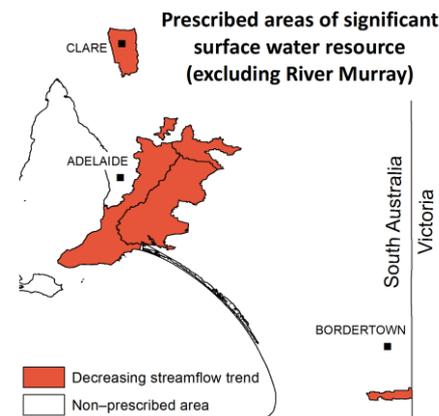
### Condition

**The condition of surface water quality and quantity is considered to be fair.**

While the long-term streamflow trend is declining, the overall condition of surface water resources is fair. Management by water allocation plans (WAPs) seeks to ensure that the condition of our surface water resources is sustainable.

Because of variable rainfall, surface water does not always meet the full consumptive demand and may be supplemented by other water sources, such as groundwater, in dry periods.

**Although streamflows are declining across most of South Australia, water quality is generally stable**



### Why is surface water important?

Surface water resources are fundamental for our industries, environment, health, and way of life. The main uses of surface water across the state are for domestic consumption, agriculture and industries.

Surface water is a limited resource in South Australia. Sustainable water management and planning, in terms of both quality and quantity, is vital to our long-term water security, the environment and the economy of the state.

### What are the pressures?

Surface water quantity is affected by climate as well as water-use demands from industry, irrigated agriculture, stock and communities.

Climate impacts rainfall patterns and can lead to a reduction in surface water run-off to rivers and streams. Reduced availability of surface water can also have adverse impacts on water quality.

Surface water quality is affected by use, stock access, sediment and run-off.

### What is being done?

Key surface water resources in South Australia are managed through WAPs under natural resources management legislation.

The quality and quantity of water resources across the state are regularly monitored and annually assessed. Science supporting WAPs is reviewed and updated as required.

Regional programs aim to reduce the impacts of land management activities on surface water quality while supporting economic productivity.

For further information see: [technical information](#)



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