

River Murray: water



Quantity and quality

South Australia's

Environmental trend and condition report card 2018

STATEWIDE



Trend
Stable



Condition
Very good



Reliability
Excellent

Trend

Over the past 40 years, the average quantity of River Murray flow to South Australia has been stable because of the contribution of environmental water, whereas the average salinity of River Murray water in South Australia has decreased.

While River Murray flows to South Australia during the millennium drought (2001–2009) were the lowest on record, three good flow years after 2010, plus the delivery of additional environmental water, has meant the long-term average flow has remained stable (top figure). Without the additional environmental water, the long-term trend in flow would be decreasing.

River Murray salinity at Morgan and Murray Bridge shows a strong, decreasing trend (bottom figure). This improvement can be attributed to salinity management actions, such as salt interception schemes and the adoption of more efficient irrigation practices.

The Basin Plan will restore flows to the River Murray and provide more environmental water and reduced salinity.

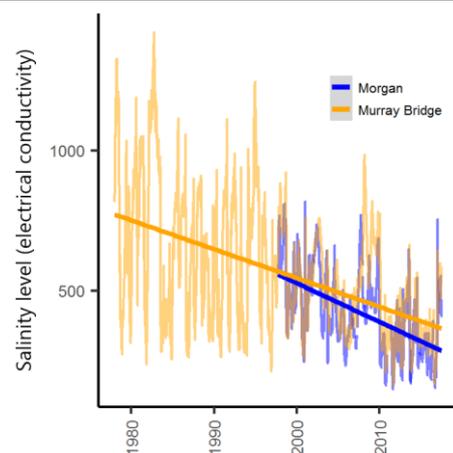
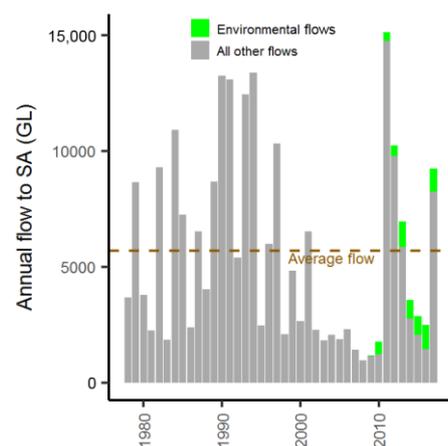
Condition

The condition of River Murray water quantity and quality is very good.

River Murray flows to South Australia for 2016–17, including environmental water, were in the top 25% of flows for the past 40 years, with approximately 9,238 gegalitres (GL) coming across the border. For reference, 1 GL = 1 billion litres, which is equivalent to the volume in around 400 Olympic swimming pools.

The high flows, in conjunction with salinity management actions, helped to maintain salinity levels below Basin Plan targets for the South Australian River Murray in 2016–17.

The flows of 2016–17 were in the top 25% of flows for the past 40 years and helped maintain healthy salinity levels



Why is River Murray water important?

The River Murray is one of South Australia's most important natural resources. It provides water for most of the people in the state, as well as for a large proportion of the state's agriculture and industry. The River Murray also supports diverse ecosystems, and social and cultural values. All of these are dependent on good water quantity and quality.

What are the pressures?

Regulation of the River Murray, combined with river operations arrangements to support irrigation, public water supply and navigation, has reduced the volume of water flowing to South Australia and altered the patterns of flow in the river, as well as the connections between the river and its wetlands and floodplains.

River regulation and increased water extraction, in conjunction with the clearance of native vegetation and the development of agriculture across the Basin, has also increased salinity levels in the River Murray.

What is being done?

The Basin Plan provides for a coordinated approach to the management of water resources in the Murray–Darling Basin.

The implementation of the Basin Plan is already having a positive effect on the South Australian River Murray by demonstrably boosting flows and helping to reduce salinity levels in the river.

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



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