

# 2014 State Report Card

## Is the quality of the water from the River Murray improving for recreation, irrigation and treatment prior to drinking?

The River Murray provides water for human communities, agriculture and fishing, and supports cultural heritage, recreation and tourism. The river also provides habitats for native plants, including floodplain trees, and animals such as birds, fish, frogs and invertebrates. They all depend on good water quality for their survival.

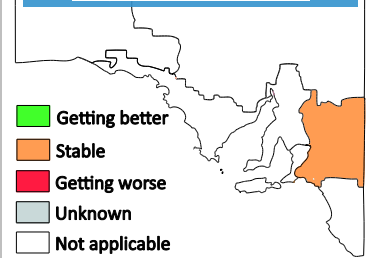
In 2014, the river supplied about 360 gigalitres of water to irrigators and 42 gigalitres of drinking water to people near Adelaide. The river also supplied 35 gigalitres of drinking water to the SA Murray–Darling Basin, South East, Northern and Yorke, and Eyre Peninsula NRM regions.

Water quality targets and guidelines have been set by the Government of South Australia and the [Water Act 2007-Basin Plan 2012](#) for drinking, recreation, irrigation and flow management. In South Australia, water quality is monitored and managed by the [Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources](#), [Murray-Darling Basin Authority](#), [EPA](#) and [SA Water](#), which also control flows, water treatment and some polluting activities. Pollutants enter the river through irrigation, septic tanks, drainage, storm water, vessels and farm runoff, and salt enters the river from groundwater.

Basin Plan targets did not exist until 2012. To provide historical context, this report tracks the number of targets that were met from 2008. This report should be read alongside others on the [salt flushed](#) from the Murray, the [flows](#) to support human communities and ecosystems, and the ecological [condition](#) of the river.



Trend in the percentage of River Murray water quality targets that were met



 **State target**  
Maintain the productive capacity of our natural resources

**Trend (2010–14)**

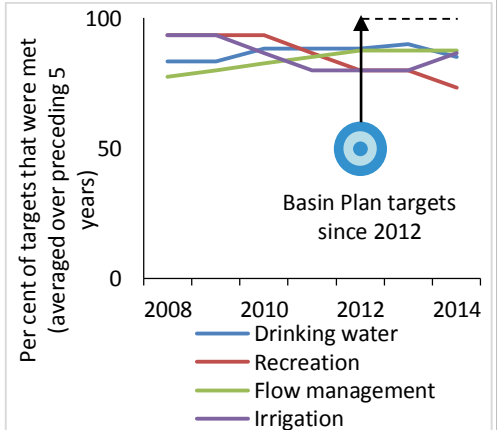
Stable

Overall, the number of water quality targets met each year has been stable. The number of targets met for irrigation has increased, the number for flow management has been stable, and the number for drinking water and recreation has decreased.

Water for drinking (prior to treatment) is managed to meet targets for salinity, clarity, alkalinity and dissolved carbon. If these targets are not met, the costs of [treating water](#) increase to ensure that it is safe to drink. Since 2004, targets for dissolved carbon, clarity and salinity have been met, but in some years the alkalinity has been too low.

Water for recreation has [blue-green algae](#) (Cyanobacteria) and [other](#) targets. Since 2010, targets for water acidity (pH) and temperature were met, but oxygen levels were lower than the recreational targets in some years (e.g. blackwater events 2010 and 2012).

Water for irrigation has salinity [targets](#). The water at Murray Bridge was too salty between 2009–11, but all targets have been met since 2012. [Flow management](#) has [salinity, oxygen](#) and blue-green algae targets. Since 2008, targets for oxygen and most salinity targets have been met. Salinity has been too high at Milang.



**Where we are at (2014)**

Good

In 2014, three quarters of the water quality targets for drinking water, two-thirds for recreation, 87 per cent for flow management and all targets for irrigation were met

In 2014, three quarters of the drinking water targets were met – alkalinity was too low in 2014. Two-thirds of recreational water [targets](#) were met – oxygen levels did not meet the target. All targets for irrigation and almost all of the targets for flow management were met.

The [Government of South Australia](#), [SA Water](#), [South Australian Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board](#), [Murray-Darling Basin Authority](#) and [Commonwealth Environmental Water Office](#) are working to improve water flows and quality for all river users, particularly in droughts.

**Reliability of information**



Good

Further information: [Technical information for this report card](#)

