

Annual Water Security Update 2026



**Government
of South Australia**

Department for
Environment and Water

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department for Environment and Water acknowledges Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Nations of the lands and waters we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect the deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country.

The Department works in partnership with the First Peoples of South Australia and supports their Nations to take a leading role in caring for their Country.

Cover photo: Emergency Bulk Water Collection Point at Woodside. Credit DEW.

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Introduction

Water security means having an acceptable quantity and quality of water for people, industry, agriculture and the environment now and into the future. A comprehensive understanding of South Australia's current water security status and risks is needed to enable South Australians to continue to adapt and plan for water security challenges, including with respect to a changing climate. In this context, the *Water Industry Act 2012* requires that a water security update report be prepared by 31 March each year which relates to the state water demand and supply statement, the *Water Security Statement 2022 – Water for Sustainable Growth* (DEW 2022a). This report, the *Annual Water Security Update 2026*, is intended to meet this statutory reporting requirement and includes:

- information on urban Adelaide's current water security
- a snapshot of water security by region
- detail on how current and future water security risks are being addressed.

Future climate projections and observed longer term trends in temperature and rainfall indicate an increasing likelihood of hotter and drier conditions (DEW 2022b), as well as more frequent extreme weather events such as flood and drought, both of which South Australia has experienced in recent times. Population growth, increased demands for greening and cooling, environmental water requirements and increases in agricultural and industrial production are already placing greater demands on South Australia's water resources. The changing climate and increasing demand for water require South Australia to continue adapting to ensure most of the state's population continues to have high levels of water security over the decades to come. This requires sustainable and adaptive water resource management, an innovative and competitive water industry, strong collaboration between the water industry and research organisations, fit-for-purpose investment in water infrastructure and technologies and integrated urban water management that optimises the use of all available water sources.

The *Annual Water Security Update 2026* reports on a range of water sources used across South Australia, which include:

- River Murray water distributed via pipeline to various regions of the state (Figure 2Figure 2)
- groundwater resources
- surface water resources
- recycled wastewater
- desalinated seawater and groundwater
- captured stormwater
- rainwater tanks.

The range of water demand categories considered include:

- public water supply
- primary production
- mining
- industrial water requirements
- cultural water
- environmental water requirements
- urban greening and cooling.

This report is produced as a point-in-time document, current at the time of publication. Current and historical data are referenced to give a comprehensive water security picture.

State overview

Water Resources

South Australia has a wide range of water resources that are used to supply water, including surface water, groundwater, desalinated water, stormwater and recycled water. Where water resources are prescribed, a water licensing system allows an individual or business to own water entitlements, which provide a share of the available water resource in the form of a water allocation volume. In many cases water entitlement or allocation volumes may be traded, allowing water to move to where it can be used most productively.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of water used from prescribed surface water and groundwater resources in 2024-25, as well as the percentage use of stormwater, recycled wastewater and desalinated water. The total volume of water used was 1,712 gigalitres (GL). Relatively small additional volumes were also used from groundwater sources in non-prescribed areas and via direct rainfall capture using rainwater tanks.

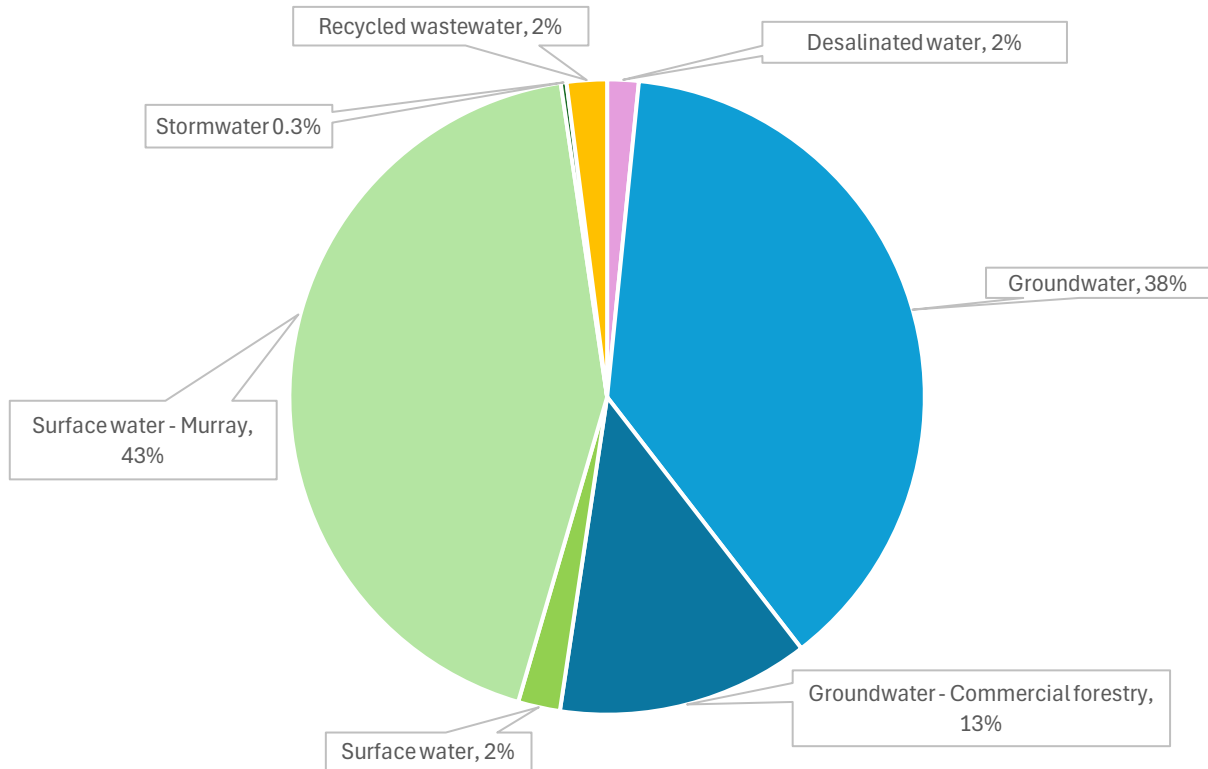


Figure 1. Percentage of water used by resource type for South Australia in 2024-25

Groundwater

Groundwater is an important resource across large areas of South Australia. In 2024-25, 649.4 GL was used for irrigated agriculture, domestic supply, stock, mining, industrial applications, town drinking water supplies and irrigation of recreation and sports grounds. For the same period, 220 GL is estimated to have been used by plantation forestry in the Lower Limestone Coast.

Surface water

Surface water is, by volume, the next most significant resource. Due to our dry climate, South Australia's surface water systems are mainly ephemeral, flowing in response to rainfall events. The exception is the River Murray, which is a regulated system with water delivered from 4 major storage dams upstream of the South Australian border. River Murray water is transported via pipeline to many locations within South Australia. Figure 2 shows the major pipelines that distribute River Murray water across the state. In 2024-25, 738.6 GL was used for consumptive purposes from the River Murray in South Australia. For the same period, 36.6 GL was used from all other prescribed surface water.

Recycled water

This includes capture and re-use of wastewater and use of stormwater. In 2024-25, 35.0 GL of recycled wastewater was re-used in South Australia. Over the same period, 5.0 GL of stormwater was re-used.

Desalinated water

In 2024-25, 27.4 GL of desalinated water was produced by plants operated by SA Water. Water for desalination is sourced from groundwater or the sea.

The Adelaide Desalination Plant (ADP), commissioned by the Government of South Australia during the Millennium Drought to safeguard Adelaide’s water security, is the state’s largest desalination plant¹. In 2024-25 the ADP played an important role in metropolitan Adelaide’s water supply mix producing 26.5GL of water. A further 0.9 GL was produced by plants servicing regional communities located at Penneshaw, Oodnadatta, Marla, Leigh Creek, Hawker, Indulkana, Kaltjiti (Fregon), Yunyarinyi (Kenmore Park), Murputja and Mimili and Yalata. Desalination plants owned and operated by local councils and private individuals also contribute additional volumes of desalinated water used in South Australia.

Water distribution

SA Water supply network

SA Water is the Government of South Australia owned water utility providing essential water and wastewater services to more than 1.8 million people across the state. As the state’s major water retailer, SA Water is the main supplier of drinking quality water, with a water supply network incorporating infrastructure such as pipelines, treatment plants, storage facilities and pump stations across the state. SA Water also has recycled water networks which distribute treated wastewater for uses such as irrigation or public open space.

Figure 2Figure 2 shows the extent of SA Water’s supply services in South Australia.

Self-supplied households and businesses

While water networks service a large percentage of the state’s population, there are households that are not connected to a reticulated water supply network. In these instances, households and businesses are responsible for maintaining their own water supply.

Self-supplied households are encouraged to regularly monitor their water supply (bores, dams and rainwater tanks) to ensure that enough water is available to meet their needs. Where a property owner identifies a risk of storages running dry, the onus is on them to proactively book water deliveries. A list of drinking water carters can be found on the SA Health website².

¹ The Adelaide Desalination Plant has produced greater than 230 GL since its introduction to the water supply system in 2012 and has a maximum production capacity of 100 GL per year. It provides a baseload capacity to the drinking water system, and the ability to scale up production quickly when dry conditions occur.

²<https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/public+health/water+quality/providing+saf e+drinking+water/registered+drinking+water+providers>

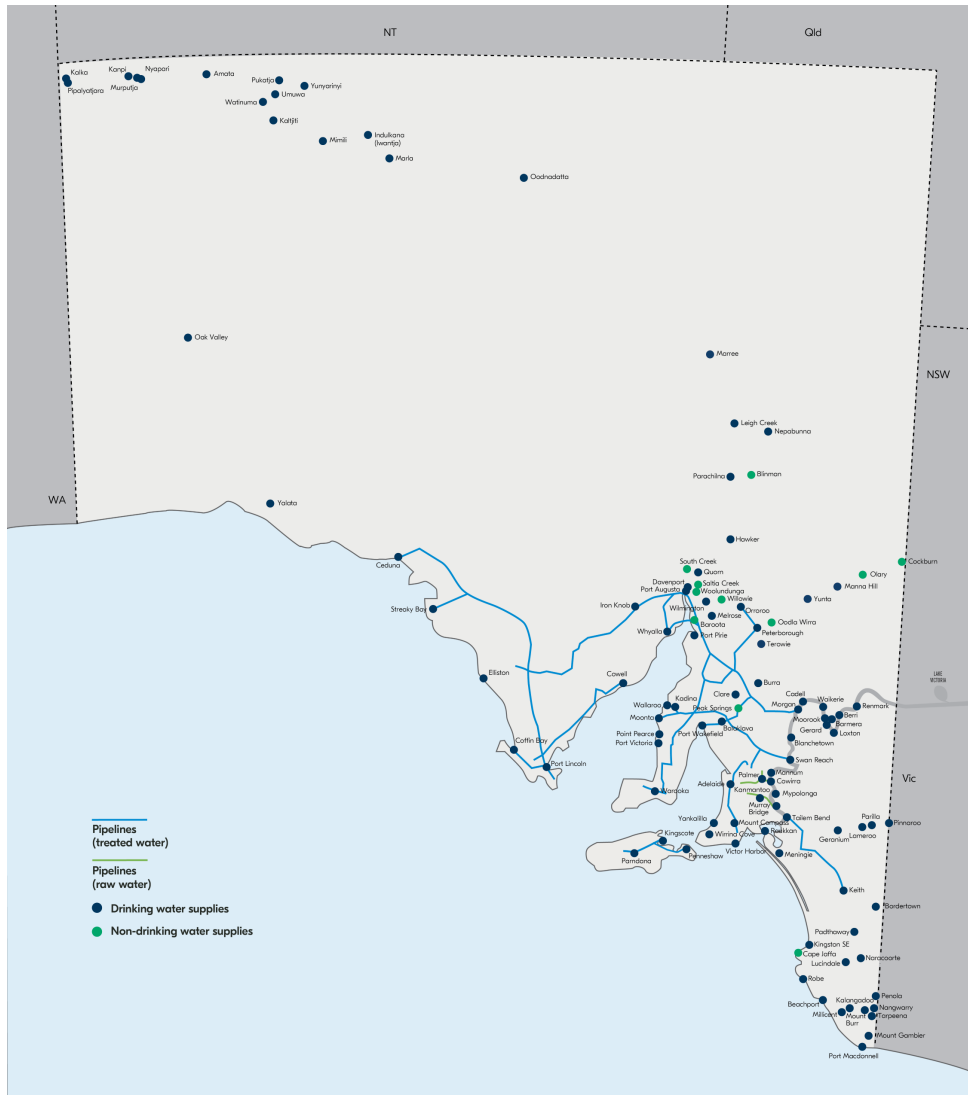


Figure 2. SA Water water supply services

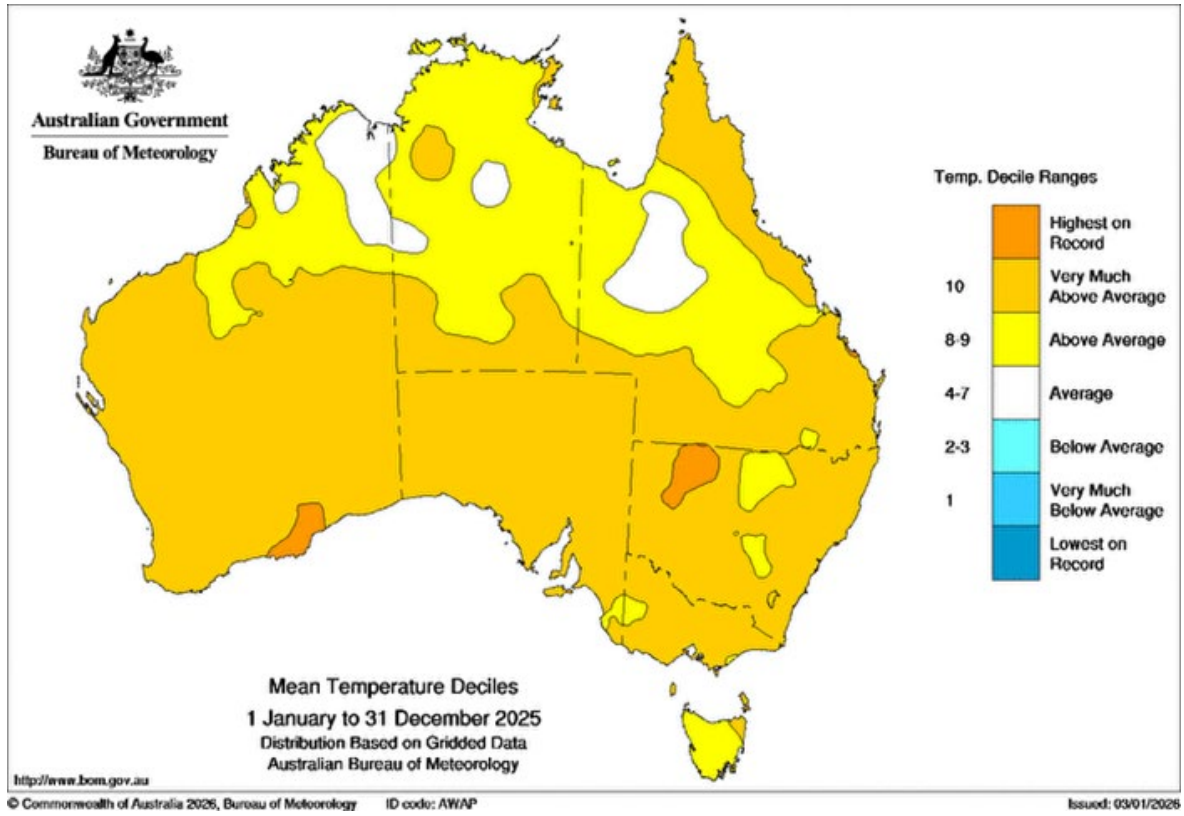
Climate in 2025

Each year the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM 2025b) publishes a [summary of South Australia's climate](#). Summary statistics show that:

- 2025 was the driest year in South Australia since 2019
- South Australia's area-averaged rainfall total in 2025 was 161.0 mm, 28% below the 1961–1990 average
- rainfall totals in 2025 were below to very much below average for most of the state and above average in parts of the far north-east
- monthly rainfall totals for South Australia were below average for most months during 2025, with the driest May since 2005. July 2025 was the state's wettest July since 1998
- mean maximum temperatures in 2025 were above to very much above average for all of the state
- South Australia's area-averaged mean maximum temperature was 28.6 °C, 1.86 °C above the 1961–1990 average, the fourth warmest on record for all years since 1910.

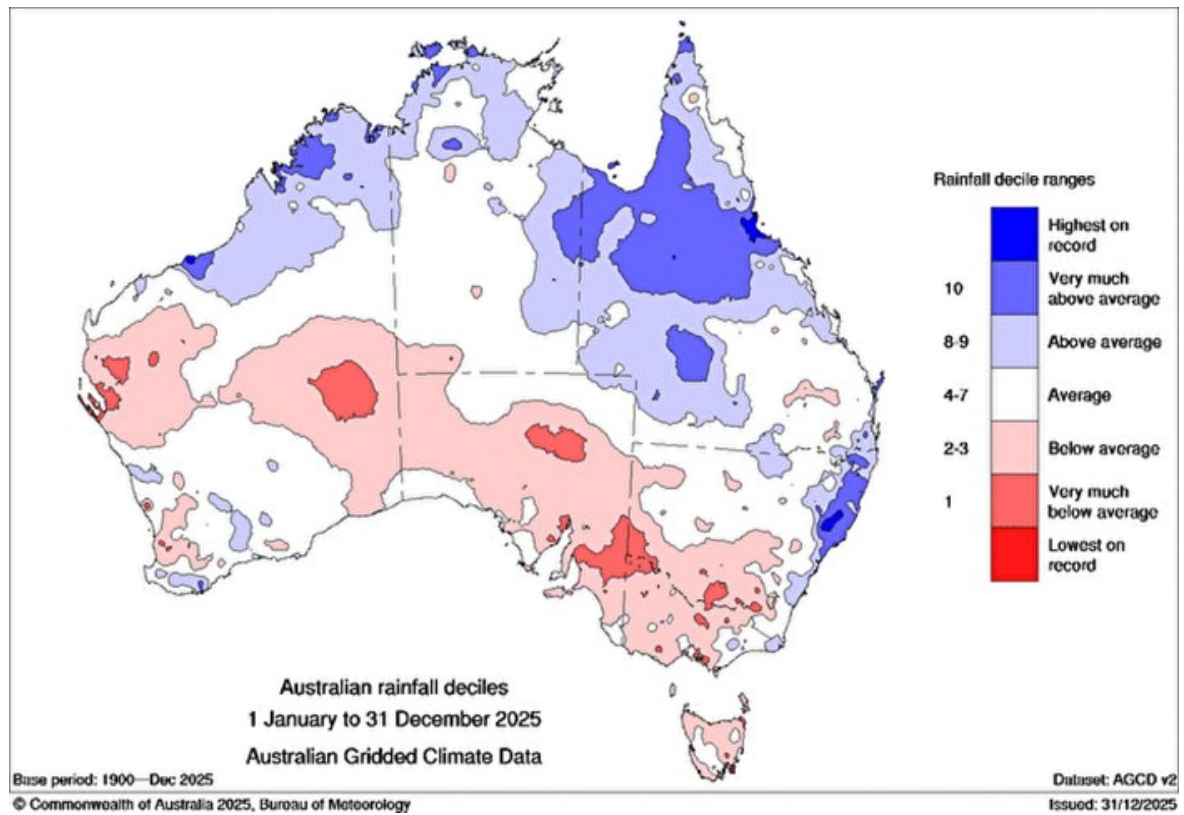
A visual representation of this information was obtained from BOM's [Annual Climate Statement 2025](#) (BOM 2025a) and shown in the figures below:

- mean temperature deciles for 2025 (Figure 3Figure 3)
- rainfall deciles for 2025 (Figure 4Figure 4)
- root-zone soil moisture deciles for 2025 (Figure 5Figure 5).



(source: BOM)

Figure 3. Mean temperature deciles for 2025



(source: BOM)

Figure 4. Rainfall deciles for 2025

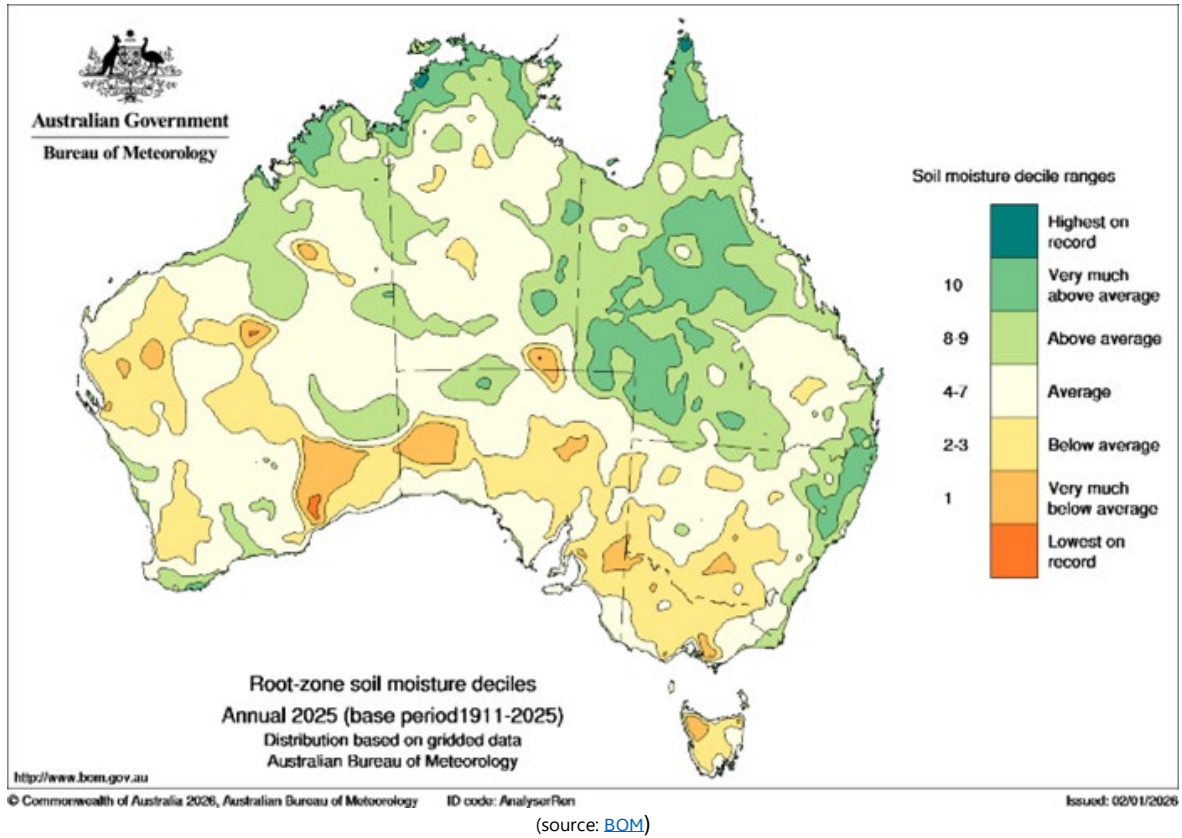


Figure 5. Root-zone soil moisture deciles for 2025

Climate change projections

The Department for Environment and Water (DEW) developed [climate change projections for South Australia](#) in 2022. An online tool was released in 2024 to give businesses, government agencies and the community access to climate projection maps and data. The interactive maps display projected changes to temperatures and rainfall across South Australia for a range of future time periods and climate emissions scenarios. The climate data can be displayed in 10 km and 50 km grids or for individual SA landscape regions or local health network areas (see the [Climate projections viewer](#) and [Climate projections viewer FAQs](#)). The [Guide to climate projections for risk assessment and planning in South Australia 2022](#) provides reliable information on the likely future changes in South Australia’s climate to help councils, regions, industry, and climate adaptation leaders to plan for the future.

Strategic water security directions and initiatives

Supporting housing and population growth

Each planning region in South Australia has a regional plan to guide development and growth over a 30-year timeframe. The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan (GARP) was released in March 2025, and the regional plans for the 6 country regions (Far North, Eyre and Western, Yorke and Mid North, Kangaroo Island, Limestone Coast and Murray Mallee) were released in January 2026.

Regional plans help ensure a coordinated approach to meeting the future housing and employment needs of a growing population with a sufficient supply of land and timely investments in infrastructure. Water infrastructure and water supply is a key element of supporting this population growth. The regional plans highlight population growth scenarios, with potential for the population to grow by up to 672,400 people in Greater Adelaide (PlanSA 2025) and 66,000 people across the country regions by 2051 (PlanSA 2026).

SA Water is currently developing 50-year water strategies in collaboration with key stakeholders across the seven South Australian Planning Regions, which will ensure water is available to support the growth outlined in regional plans. Each strategy will be developed with a 50-year lens and using an:

- integrated water management approach to ensure preparedness to support growth with resilient water supplies for future generations
- adaptive planning process to prepare for future uncertainties impacting water supply and demand, such as climate change and growth.

Recognising a lack of affordable housing, the Government of South Australia released the Housing Roadmap in 2024. The Housing Roadmap makes a commitment to accelerate initiatives and develop innovative solutions to get more South Australians into their own homes. This includes fast tracking land releases for urban development. To support these new growth areas, it is also necessary to bring forward significant investment in water infrastructure and the Housing Roadmap included a funding commitment for SA Water to invest \$1.5 billion between 2024 and 2028 to expand the water and wastewater networks to new growth areas. This expansion is crucial to support new housing developments located on the outskirts of existing networks.

This significant investment represents the largest expansion of the state's water and wastewater network in decades, establishing a foundation to unlock servicing capacity for 50,000 new homes by the 2050's. Keeping pace with the increasing demands on pipes, pump stations, tanks and treatment facilities will ensure that the network is upgraded to prepare for future needs while reliable services are maintained for existing customers.

Since SA Water started work on this critical infrastructure in September 2024, more than 32,000 metres of combined water and sewer pipes have been laid, enabling approval for almost 9,000 housing lots. Planned works include: 30 kilometres of new trunk water mains; 54 kilometres of trunk wastewater mains; 9 new water and wastewater pumping stations; and 2 new water storage tanks.

Transition to more climate-resilient water supplies

As communities continue to grow and develop and the climate becomes hotter and drier, there will be increasing demands on existing water systems. Our state's resilience to these demands is enhanced by having a diverse range of water sources, including options that do not rely on rainfall. Climate-independent water sources, such as desalinated seawater and recycled water, are important components of South Australia's water supply mix. Water security is further enhanced by fit for purpose use of water.

Desalinated Seawater

Kangaroo Island

In December 2024 a new 2 ML per day desalination plant began producing water on Kangaroo Island. The plant supplements water supplied from the existing Penneshaw desalination facility and the Middle River Reservoir. For the first time, popular areas on Kangaroo Island, like American River and Island Beach, now have access to the SA Water drinking water network. The new desalination plant also provides better bushfire protection for the eastern area of the Island, with more water and access points for firefighters.

Eyre Peninsula

In November 2024, the Government of South Australia announced approvals for a desalination plant to be built near Port Lincoln at Billy Lights Point. Central to the future water security of the region, this climate-independent water source is expected to come online by the end of 2026 to supplement the existing Uley South groundwater basin. The plant will support the delivery of safe, clean drinking water to around 35,000 customers across the region.

Northern Water Project

The Northern Water Project is a water supply project aiming to deliver a reliable, climate-resilient source of water to the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North of the State, through the construction of a new desalination plant and water pipeline at Mullaquana Station, 20km south of Whyalla. The project will provide stable and reliable water, independent of climate variability, to support the growth of future industries. This will realise the full potential of our state's copper province, where major mines are connected to a central smelter and refinery hub and significantly boost Australia's position as a key driver of global decarbonisation. Desalinated water will be delivered to commercial offtakers through an approximately 400km pipeline, allowing industry to reduce their reliance on fragile water resources such as the Great Artesian Basin.

The Project has pre-committed funding from the South Australian Government, BHP and the Australian Government for the pre-delivery costs for the required activities to inform the Project's Final Investment Decision (FID). Through the National Water Grid Fund the Australian Government is contributing \$65 million towards pre-FID costs via the Northern Water (preconstruction) Project.

Whole-of-government work on the project, and the opportunities it unlocks, has substantially stepped up this year. The state has now entered a critical period leading up to a decision on investing in this significant economic enabler for South Australia. The next key steps for the Project are to:

- complete a procurement process via a Request for Proposal, to deliver detailed designs and market-tested pricing, enabling finalisation of offtake agreements and informing the State Government's FID
- progress the planning and environmental assessment including submission under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (SA) and referral under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth)
- securing foundational offtake agreements to support the Project's commercial viability and unlock intergenerational economic opportunities across South Australia
- continue extensive marine and terrestrial environmental studies
- progress Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys and Native Title negotiations
- continued engagement with landowners, stakeholders and the community to ensure risks and opportunities are adequately identified, understood and addressed.

The FID will serve as the major decision point for the South Australian Government on whether to proceed with the Project.

Recycled Water

SA Water is Australia's second largest water recycler, reusing 1 in every 3 litres of treated wastewater. Water produced by the Glenelg, Bolivar, Christies Beach, Aldinga, Willunga and Sellicks Beach Wastewater treatment plants are important contributors to South Australia's water supply mix. Recycled water networks are continuing to expand which takes pressure off drinking water systems, such as in Port Lincoln where expansions are underway through a partnership between SA Water, the City of Port Lincoln and the Department for Education.

Fit-For-Purpose Use of Water

The Government of South Australia is continuing to work with local councils to link non-potable demands in council areas to alternative water sources, with the aim of reserving water treated to potable standard for drinking. To support this goal unallocated water entitlement shares for groundwater in the Adelaide Plains region have been sold at a concessional rate where water is to be used for greening and cooling activities. In addition, approximately \$32 million of Australian Government funding has been secured through the Alternative Water Supply Efficiency Measures (AWSEM) Program for investment in new stormwater harvesting infrastructure and the upgrade of distribution networks to promote the use of alternative water supplies. Further information is available in the 'Regional Water Security' section; see the Adelaide Plains and Murraylands and Riverland water security summaries for more information.

Climate change and adaptive management

A key challenge for South Australia's water sector in the decades ahead will be to ensure security of our water supplies and to provide for additional water demands, while ensuring water services remain affordable.

In line with the priorities identified in the 2022 Water Security Statement, the Government of South Australia is investing in projects to better understand water security risks in a changing climate. This has already led to improved climate

and water availability predictions for the Barossa and McLaren Vale regions. The McLaren Vale Regional Water Security Strategy was released in February 2026.

The 50-year water strategies being developed by SA Water for each of the 7 planning regions will use an adaptive planning process to prepare for future uncertainties, such as climate change and growth. Shaped by meaningful engagement, the strategies will enable SA Water to deliver resilient, sustainable water services into the future that reflect customer values and regional priorities. The 50-year water strategies will be supported by water security response plans. Water Security response plans outline the actions that will be taken should a water supply system become stressed.

In December 2025, SA Water updated the Eyre Peninsula [Water Security Response Plan](#). The plan outlines four water security response levels and actions required to be taken based on drinking water availability, ranging from Level 1: normal water availability to Level 4: Extreme water shortage.

Long-term water security will involve a multidisciplinary assessment of the challenges and potential solutions across the water cycle for water, wastewater and stormwater services, contributing to enhanced water security, public health, environmental and urban amenity outcomes.

Investigate the impacts of climate change on rainfall, runoff and recharge project

This project, funded by the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Fund, will update rainfall–runoff–recharge relationships and develop new relationships, where required, to incorporate climate projections in water balance calculations. Rainfall-recharge and rainfall-runoff relationships show how much recharge or runoff can be expected for a groundwater system, or surface water catchment, for a given amount of rainfall on an annual basis.

Updating these relationships will provide data and information that underpins the development and/or amendment of existing water management policies across the water sector in South Australia. So far, the project has undertaken analysis of the influence of climate change on rainfall, surface water runoff and groundwater recharge relationships for parts of the Limestone Coast, Eyre Peninsula, Mount Lofty Ranges and Fleurieu Peninsula. The impact of climate-driven surface water changes on water dependent ecosystems is also being analysed. The work will continue through to mid-2027.

Water allocation plans (WAPs)

Twelve statutory water allocation plans are currently in development, under review or being amended (Appendix B). DEW is actively engaging with landscape boards to ensure that the next generation of water allocation plans include adaptive management approaches that facilitate effective and sustainable water resource management in a changing climate.

Preparing for and responding to drought

Drought is a regular phenomenon in South Australia, although its occurrence and severity is hard to predict. The past 24 months have seen significant rainfall deficiencies across the state, with several regions experiencing the lowest rainfall on record for this period.

SA Water undertook a range of activities to ensure service levels were maintained across the state during dry conditions. Activities included:

- development of water security response plans
- assessment of water security risks across the state
- increased use of the Adelaide Desalination Plant
- increased asset maintenance to support additional transfer of water across the state
- identification of opportunities to substitute the use of drinking water with recycled water
- expansion of recycled water networks, which take pressure off drinking water systems, e.g. in Port Lincoln
- ‘save water’ public messaging and education campaigns for the Eyre Peninsula
- ‘water wise’ public messaging and education campaigns for the rest of the state.

Drought Support

The Government of South Australia is investing \$97 million to support farmers affected by drought. The support package has been designed in direct consultation with primary producers, including roundtables with farmers and key industry bodies. To date the package has included financial support for on-farm drought infrastructure, community events and wellbeing support, fee relief, financial counselling, low interest loans, pest management and public water

infrastructure, as well as funding to help donated fodder reach more communities. The Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia (PIRSA) website³ provides further information about active initiatives.

Drought Support Package initiatives directly related to water security delivered by February 2026 include:

- **On-farm Drought Infrastructure Rebate Scheme.** The scheme provided grants of up to \$20,000 to eligible primary producers for activities that included new or upgrades to existing infrastructure for water access, storage, distribution and irrigation. The program opened on 12 December 2024 and closed on 31 January 2026. Over 4,800 applications have been approved to help primary producers with on-farm drought management and preparedness.
- **Publicly Accessible Standpipe Upgrade Fund.** A Grant program available to councils for the upgrade of publicly accessible standpipes in regional areas. The grant program opened on 5 May 2025 and closed 31 January 2026. To date eight applications from local councils have been approved for funding.
- **Emergency bulk water collection points.** Funding was made available to support the provision of standpipes for critical human water needs in the Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu region. In early 2025, due to the exceptional dry conditions, an unprecedented number of off-grid properties needed to engage the services of a commercial water carter to meet their domestic water needs. Due to the high number of properties requiring a water delivery at the same time, the demand for water carting services in the broader Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu region exceeded capacity. In response, DEW and SA Water partnered to establish 5 emergency bulk water collection points. Sites were established at Brukunga (Adelaide Hills), Woodside (Adelaide Hills), Sandergrove (near Strathalbyn), McLaren Vale and Elizabeth Park. The collection points were established to provide households with access to water while they waited for water to be delivered by a carter. The last site was closed on 7 June 2025. Between 6 March and 7 June 2025, there were 456 visits to the emergency bulk water collection points, with 478,104 litres of potable water collected. In parallel to operating the bulk water collection sites, to support the flexing of the water carting industry, the Government (SA Health) fast tracked the registration process for businesses wanting to register as providers of drinking water. Thirteen new carters were approved to supply drinking water between March and April 2025.

Through the *Australian Government Drought Plan*, including a \$5 billion Future Drought Fund, the Australian Government provides funding to help Australian farmers and communities to become more prepared for, and resilient to, the impacts of drought.

PIRSA is coordinating the delivery of two Future Drought Fund programs in South Australia jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund (\$100 million a year) and the Government of South Australia as follows:

Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program

The Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program supports regionally based partnerships to develop drought resilience plans. These plans will identify and guide innovative ways to withstand future droughts, with a focus on agriculture and allied industries. Since the Regional Drought Resilience Planning Program commenced in 2021, regional partnerships in the following regions have conducted planning processes to develop drought resilience plans:

- Murraylands and Riverland
- Northern and Yorke
- Far North and Outback
- Limestone Coast
- Eyre Peninsula
- Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island.

In the next phase of the program, regions will have an opportunity to apply for implementation funding for eligible activities identified in their plans.

Farm Business Resilience Program

The Farm Business Resilience Program prepares Australian farmers, farm managers and farm employees to better manage risks relating to drought and its impacts. This helps improve economic, environmental, and social resilience.

³ Any primary producer or small farming business owner who is experiencing financial difficulty or who has concerns about the impacts of the dry conditions can also seek assistance from PIRSA's Family and Business Mentors by calling the Recovery Hotline on 1800 931 314 or visiting the PIRSA website.

The program is run in partnership with industry bodies including Livestock SA, Grain Producers SA, the Wine Grape Council of South Australia, AUSVEG SA and SA Dairy farmers. It allows the livestock, wine grape, grains, dairy and vegetable sectors to access industry-led training in:

- strategic business skills
- risk management
- natural resource management
- personal and social resilience (e.g. succession planning).

In 2025 programs delivered by industry were offered to the following sectors:

- broadacre
- wine grape
- vegetable
- grains
- dairy
- apiary.

The program also supports farmers to develop or update their existing farm business plans and connects them with Family and Business (FaB) Mentors for one-on-one independent advice on their plan. The PIRSA website has a range of tools to help primary production businesses self-assess their business fitness and find opportunities to build farm business resilience, make business decisions, and prioritise business goals.

First Nations' Water Interests

The Government of South Australia acknowledges that water management since colonisation has historically excluded Aboriginal people and occurred without their proper recognition, consultation or authorisation. This history continues to affect the wellbeing of First Nations communities and their ability to care for Country. The volume of water held by First Nations groups remains extremely low across South Australia and some remote areas are at risk of water insecurity.

Throughout 2025, the Government of South Australia, in partnership with South Australian Native Title Services, held two rounds of workshops with Traditional Owners and peak bodies to explore ways to improve water planning processes and outcomes and to codesign a state approach for advancing First Nations' water interests.

A draft statewide framework has been developed based on these discussions that identifies actions to:

- strengthen recognition of cultural authority in water planning and management
- secure access to water for economic, social, environmental, spiritual and cultural purposes
- increase First Nations' ownership of water entitlements
- improve safe and reliable access to water for regional and remote communities
- ensure a consistent approach to First Nations' water interests across the state, while allowing flexibility for individual group needs.

These actions are intended to support the advancement of First Nations' water interests within, or alongside, existing water management frameworks.

An additional workshop with Native Title group representatives was held in late 2025 to present and discuss the draft framework. Representatives will reconvene in the second quarter of 2026 to provide final feedback on the draft framework. Subject to feedback and endorsement from First Nations, the framework is expected to be submitted to the State Government for consideration in around mid-2026.

The draft framework includes actions that support water related targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes the Inland Waters Target, which aims to increase First Nations' ownership of water for cultural, spiritual and economic purposes.

The Government of South Australia—through the DEW, Landscape Boards SA, SA Water and the Environment Protection Authority—will continue working with Aboriginal peoples to progress opportunities for these purposes.

Remote communities

Recent and current initiatives in regional and remote communities to provide essential wastewater services include:

- wastewater disposal system upgrades are underway at Raukkan, Gerard, Amata and Pukatja, with a full rehabilitation and expansion of the Mimili lagoons newly completed
- in Koonibba, scoping for a full upgrade of the wastewater treatment plant and associated systems, to continue producing high-quality recycled water for the local community oval.

Recent and current initiatives in regional and remote communities to improve water security include:

- in Yalata, rehabilitation of existing bores and a water search and drill program to secure water supplies for the community's reverse osmosis systems were completed with one possible new source found
- in Nipapanha, installation of new disinfection and treatment systems to improve water quality
- upgrades of the non-drinking water supplies of Terowie, Yunta and Manna Hill and Marree to drinking water quality
- a new water treatment plant at Gerard, jointly funded by the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Fund and SA Water, with the plant due to commence community supply in early 2026; new bores are also being established and equipped at Indulkana (Iwantja).
- the National Water Grid Fund and SA Water have also established [a \\$10.2 million jointly funded project](#) to improve water security across another 8 communities in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY Lands), via the revitalisation of key infrastructure, and enhancing groundwater monitoring. This project will also partner with and leverage the learnings from a [complementary \\$1.9 million APY Lands National Water Grid Fund science project](#) being led by Flinders University
- a further project, 'Securing critical water needs for self-supplied remote First Nation Communities', jointly funded by the Australian Government (through the National Water Grid Fund) and the Government of South Australia (\$4.12 million total funding) will deliver water supply, quality and access solutions for the remote self-supplied communities of Iga Warta, Leigh Creek Station, Kakalpurannha and Yappala
- upcoming water supply infrastructure upgrades for remote communities include the drilling, equipping and connection of replacement bores at Quorn, Melrose and Wilmington and new bores at Parachilna, Oodnadatta, Saltia and Hammond-Willowie.

Murray-Darling Basin

Climate projections predict that there may be significant drying in the southern Murray–Darling Basin by mid-century. There are likely to be reductions in stream flows with more frequent droughts, increased temperatures and evaporation and below-average rainfall. An increased vulnerability to flooding is also forecast in coming decades due to changes in the occurrence of extreme rainfall events in some parts of the Basin.

The drying climate outlook reinforces the importance of the Government of South Australia's commitment to securing the full range of water recovery and environmental objectives required under the Basin Plan 2012.

In 2012 Basin states signed up to the Basin Plan – a package deal to deliver environmental outcomes equivalent to a reduction in consumptive use of 3200 GL of water through a combination of water recovery and environmental works and measures that offset the need for water recovery under the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism. This included the recovery of 450 GL of water to provide for enhanced environmental outcomes in the southern end of the system.

The primary purpose of the 450 GL is to achieve enhanced in-stream outcomes and increase connectivity between the main river channel and the floodplains in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, boosting the amount of time flow rates for the Basin's critical environmental assets can be delivered. The recovery of this 450 GL remains vital for mitigating the impacts seen during the Millennium Drought and improving local area resilience, particularly at the lower end of the system. On 4 July 2024, the Australian Government released the 450 GL recovery framework which outlines 3 key principles that will guide the approach to water recovery:

- enhancing environmental outcomes
- minimising socio-economic impacts
- achieving value for money.

The Australian Government has established 3 new programs to deliver the 450 GL target under the framework: the Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program, the Voluntary Water Purchase Program and the Sustainable Communities Program.

As at 31 December 2025, 163.8GL of water had been registered towards the 450 GL target, with an additional 57.4GL contracted but not yet registered, leaving 228.8GL still to be recovered.

SA Water Regulatory 2024-28 Business Plan

In line with the *Water Industry Act 2012*, every four years SA Water submits an investment proposal to the independent regulator, the Essential Services Commission of South Australia (ESCOSA). This proposal informs ESCOSA's regulatory determination which regulates the revenues that SA Water can earn, and the service standards that must be delivered for customers. The SA Water Regulatory Determination 2024 started on 1 July 2024 and applies to investments until 30 June 2028. Preparations are underway for the development of SA Water's regulatory business proposal for the next regulatory period which will be 2028-2032.

Adelaide's water security

Adelaide's water use in 2024-25

The relative quantities of drinking and non-drinking water from all of the various sources contributing to Adelaide's water balance in 2024-25 is illustrated in Figure 6.

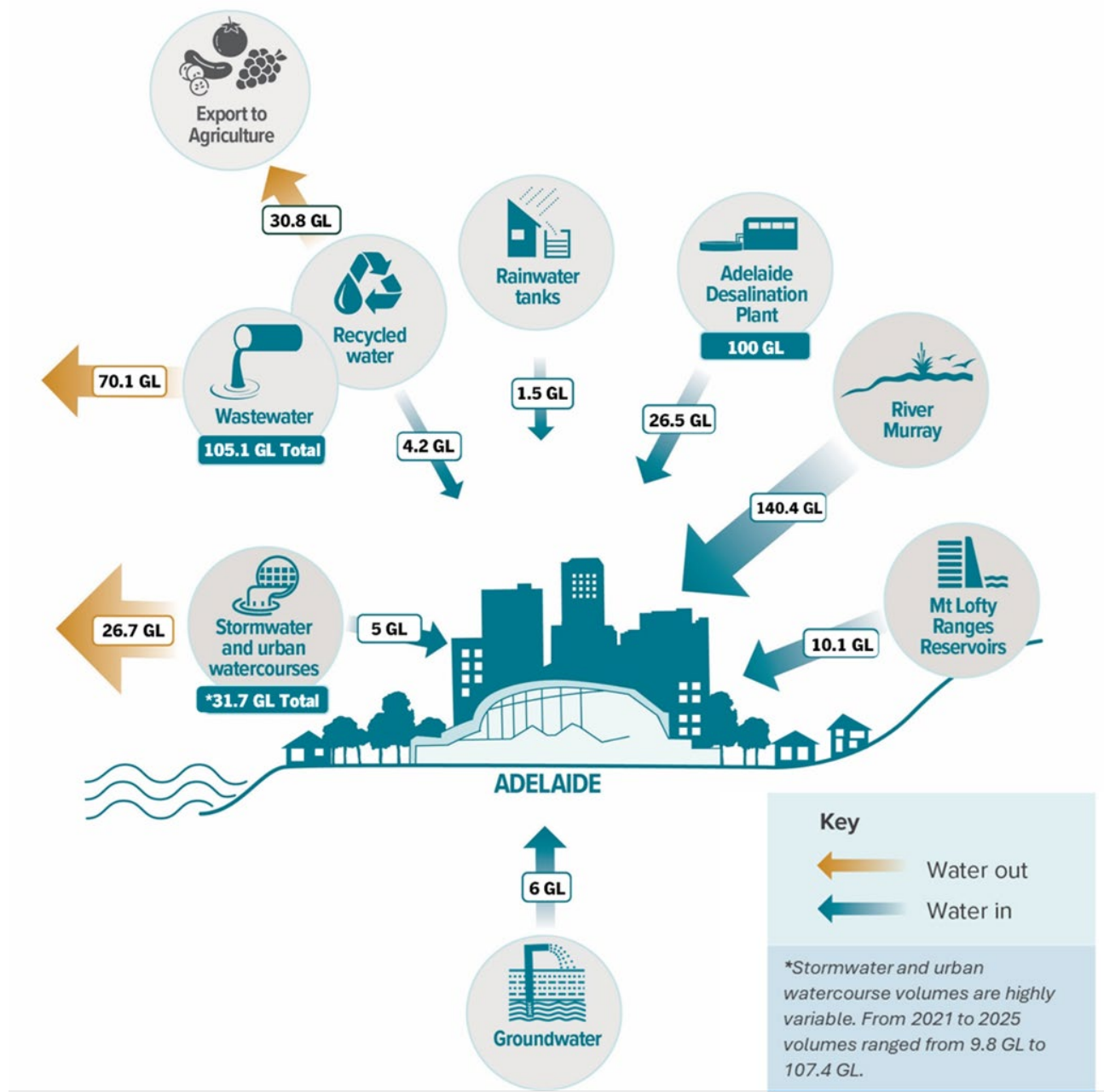
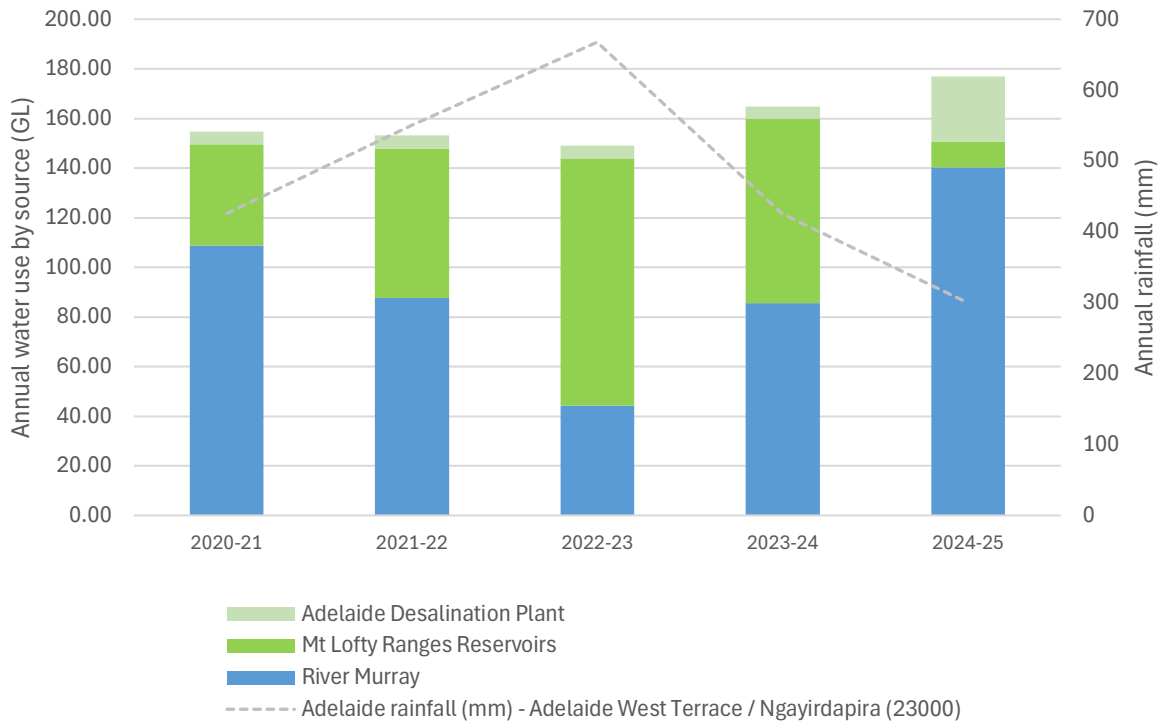


Figure 6. Urban Adelaide's water balance for 2024-25

In terms of drinking water, in 2024-25 Metropolitan Adelaide used 177 GL, which is within the recent historical range of 145 to 200 GL per year. Out of this drinking water total, 140.4 GL of water was sourced from the River Murray, 10.1 GL from Mount Lofty Ranges Reservoirs and 26.5 GL from the Adelaide Desalination Plant.

The volume of drinking water supplied to Adelaide by SA Water from its major water sources from 2020-21 to 2024-25 is shown in Figure 7.



Source: SA Water 2025

Figure 7. Adelaide’s historical use of drinking water sources

Adelaide’s water resources

In Metropolitan Adelaide, SA Water uses 3 main water sources to supply drinking water: the Western Mount Lofty Ranges catchment, River Murray and Adelaide Desalination Plant. Water from the first two of these sources is stored in reservoirs, before being treated to drinking water standard at water treatment plants and supplied to the community via an extensive network of tanks, pipelines and pumps.

A balanced mix of all 3 water sources is required to service demand with the drinking water supply mix varying from year to year. The annual volume of water supplied to urban Adelaide depends on a range of factors including climatic conditions, population growth and patterns of use. Temperature and rainfall influence water use, particularly during summer periods when more water is used to water gardens, parks and sportsgrounds. The same factors also influence inflows to our storages.

The Adelaide Desalination Plant, commissioned by the Government of South Australia during the Millennium Drought to safeguard Adelaide’s water security, began operation in 2012 and is the state’s largest desalination plant. This climate-resilient water source is particularly crucial during periods of low inflows into the Western Mount Lofty Ranges catchment and restricted water availability in the River Murray. Today the Adelaide Desalination Plant is an essential component of the supply system with a capacity to produce 100 GL of water per year.

With the below average conditions in 2024-25, the percentage that each source contributed to Adelaide’s water balance changed with a greater contribution from the River Murray and Adelaide Desalination Plant and a lesser contribution from the Mount Lofty Ranges reservoirs (Figure 7).

Several other water suppliers provide non-drinking water across Adelaide for a range of irrigation and industrial uses. A small amount of recycled wastewater was used in urban Adelaide (4.2 GL in 2024-25) with a far greater amount being exported for use in agriculture (30.8 GL in 2024-25). In 2024-25 the volume of stormwater running off to the sea was 26.7 GL.

Summary of Adelaide's water security

In the near term, Adelaide will continue to rely on the River Murray and Mount Lofty Ranges as key sources of water supply. These sources, along with the Adelaide Desalination Plant, ensure Adelaide's water security in the near term.

Dry conditions across 2023-24 and 2024-25 resulted in low inflows to Adelaide's reservoirs. Water production at the Adelaide Desalination Plant in Lonsdale increased in January 2025 to ensure Adelaide continued to have a secure water supply.

Moving forward, as a result of a changing climate, it is expected that there will be less water available from climate-dependent water sources such as the Mount Lofty Ranges catchments, the River Murray and some groundwater sources. An increased vulnerability to flooding is also forecast in coming decades as climate change increases storm severity and urban development increases impervious surfaces. Other key risks to consider in long-term planning include higher temperatures and increased frequency of droughts, bushfires and rising sea levels.

Climate risks and extreme events mean South Australians cannot rely on meeting our water needs by using only traditional water supplies. In this context, our water security and resilience will depend on smarter water use and securing supplies that are climate resilient and of a reliable quantity and quality.

These issues cannot be addressed in isolation and will require an integrated and coordinated approach that encompasses how water resources are planned and managed alongside land use, urban development and infrastructure planning. Successfully managing these issues over the coming decades will require additional investment in water networks and alternative water supplies as the population, economy and housing developments continue to grow.

Regional water security



Water resources are managed in partnership by DEW and the nine [Landscape Boards](#) established by the Minister under the [Landscape South Australia Act 2019](#). Figure 8 shows the location of the nine landscape board regions. Water use and water resource status is presented by prescribed water resource in each landscape board region. Prescribed areas in South Australia are shown in Appendix A.

Areas where there is a high demand for local ground and/or surface water and a need to sustainably manage the resource include:

- Limestone Coast
- McLaren Vale
- Adelaide Plains
- Murraylands and Riverland
- Barossa
- Eyre Peninsula
- Mount Lofty Ranges
- Clare Valley
- Far North



Figure 8. Landscape Board regions

The remainder of this report focuses on the prescribed water resources in these regions with a final section covering non-prescribed areas in other parts of the state.⁴

Across the state, the average annual volume of water used from prescribed resources in each region between 2015-16 and 2024-25, including the minimum and maximum volumes used across those years, is provided in Figure 9. The prescribed resources from which the greatest amount of water is used each year is the groundwater of the Limestone Coast⁵ (611 GL) and the surface water of the River Murray (585GL), followed by the ground and surface waters of the Mount Lofty Ranges (94 GL).

⁴ Groundwater and surface water resources in the Baroota Region are prescribed and a WAP is currently under development in this region. As such, a licensing regime is not currently in place and water use in this region is not reported on in the subsequent section.
⁵ Groundwaters of the Limestone Coast includes water used from all prescribed resources in the region (Lower Limestone Coast, Tatiara, Tintinara Coonalpyn and Padthaway).

In some regions, water sources other than the local ground and surface waters are used. In the sections below, this other water is discussed where it represents a significant portion of the total water supply.

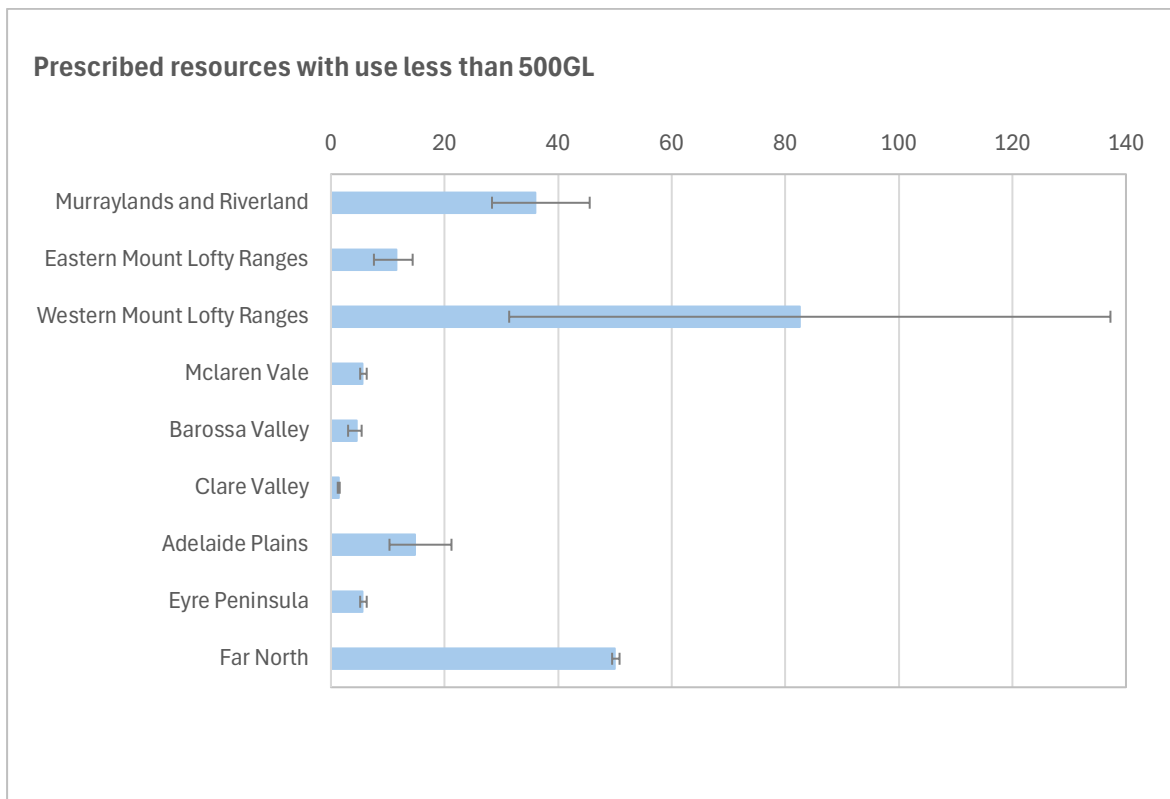
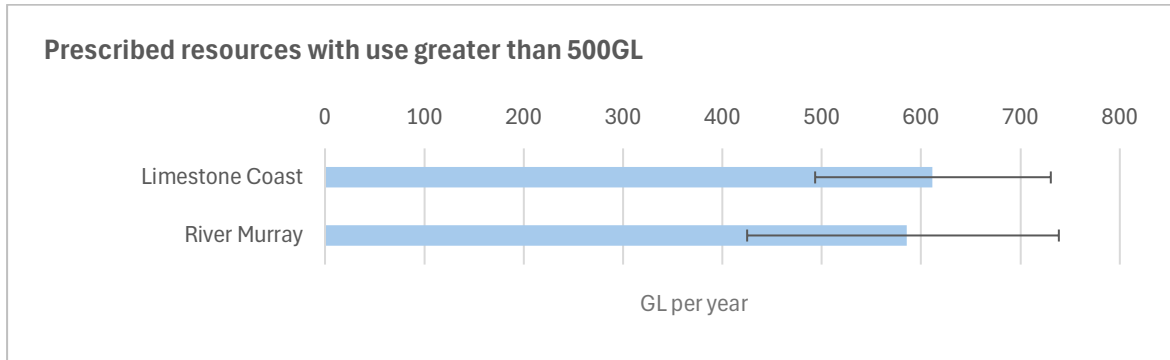


Figure 9. Average annual water use from a prescribed water resource, by region (2015-16 to 2024-25)⁶

For each of the prescribed resources, the annual water use⁷, water resource condition indicators and long-term rainfall trends are presented for each region.

The water resource condition indicators presented include:

- 2025 groundwater level compared to historical average levels
- long-term groundwater salinity trends
- long-term annual streamflow trends
- long-term trends in the number of flow days⁸.

⁶ Limestone Coast includes the Lower Limestone Coast, Tatiara, Tintinara-Coonalpyn and Padthaway. Murraylands and Riverland includes groundwater used in the Mallee, the Marne Saunders and Peake, Roby and Sherlock. Adelaide Plains use includes groundwater use from the Northern Adelaide Plains, Central Adelaide and Dry Creek.

⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the volume of water used is based on metering data reported to DEW.



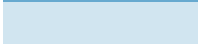
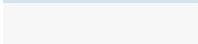
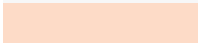


⁸ Trend date ranges are detailed below each water resource condition table.

In the tables below, stable trends are shown in blue, trends that indicate increased water availability or decreased salinity are shown in green, and trends that indicate declining water availability or increasing salinity are shown in red. The direction of the arrow on the coloured box displays the direction of the trend.

Further information on regional water resources is available in annual water resource assessment reports and supporting documents⁹.

The groundwater level status ratings in the tables that follow are based on an analysis of the 2025 groundwater levels relative to the full history of groundwater level monitoring data. The full monitoring records for all wells in an area (or within a particular aquifer) with at least 10 years of data are included in the analysis. Each monitoring well had its highest 2025 water level ranked against its respective history of monitoring, based on the decile descriptions provided in Table 1. The groundwater level decile of the median ranked well in an area is then used as an indicator of the groundwater level status rating for that area.

Table 1. Percentile/decile descriptions for resource condition

Decile	Percentile	Description*	Colour
N/A	100	Highest on record	
10	90 to 100	Very much above average	
8 and 9	70 to 90	Above average	
4, 5, 6, and 7	30 to 70	Average	
2 and 3	10 to 30	Below average	
1	0 to 10	Very much below average	
N/A	0	Lowest on record	

* Deciles descriptions as defined by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM 2023)

⁹ <https://www.waterconnect.sa.gov.au/Water-Resources/SitePages/Home.aspx>

Limestone Coast

The Limestone Coast covers approximately 28,000 square kilometres supporting a population of nearly 67,000 people. Average annual rainfall ranges from 800 mm in the south to 400 mm in the north.

The Limestone Coast landscape is dominated by more than 17,000 wetlands, many of which are groundwater dependent. Most of the wetlands in the region are fresh, becoming saline or brackish near the coast and in the northern part of the region. Originally, 50% of the region was covered by wetlands. Due to a combination of drainage, groundwater extraction and climate change, less than 3% of the region is now covered by wetlands and the health of those remaining has declined. There are 3 Ramsar wetlands of international importance at Bool Lagoon, Piccaninnie Ponds and the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland. There are 14 wetlands of national importance in the Limestone Coast.

The South Eastern Drainage Network, within the Limestone Coast area, removes water from the landscape to improve productivity and maintain transport through the region. Deeper drains in the north remove salt to reduce the area of dryland salinisation. The drainage network is managed by the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board, guided by the South East Drainage and Wetland Strategy (South Australian Government 2019). The strategy aims to manage water to reduce flooding, waterlogging and salinity and retain water in the landscape to improve productivity and environmental and cultural values.

Water in the Limestone Coast region is almost exclusively extracted from prescribed groundwater resources. Water resources in the Limestone Coast are managed under 5 WAPs:

- Lower Limestone Coast
- Tatiara
- Tintinara Coonalpyn
- Padthaway
- Morambro Creek.

The location of the prescribed areas, which align with WAPs, can be seen in Figure 10.

Lower Limestone Coast, Tintinara–Coonalpyn, Tatiara, Padthaway and Morambro Creek

Water use

Combined licenced groundwater extraction since 2020-21 in the Lower Limestone Coast, Tintinara–Coonalpyn, Tatiara and Padthaway prescribed wells areas has ranged from 493 GL to 830 GL per annum (Figure 11). Mount Gambier rainfall data is displayed in Figure 11 to provide an indication of the relationship between rainfall and groundwater use. In general, groundwater use patterns reflect rainfall trends: less groundwater is used in higher rainfall years compared to lower rainfall years. Rainfall in 2024-25 was very much below average.

In comparison to groundwater, a negligible amount of surface water is sourced from Morambro Creek. The Morambro Creek Water Allocation Plan only allows for the taking of water when flows are over a specified threshold. Water was taken in 2 of the past 5 years; the highest amount was less than 5 ML.



Figure 10. Prescribed areas in the Limestone Coast Landscape Board area

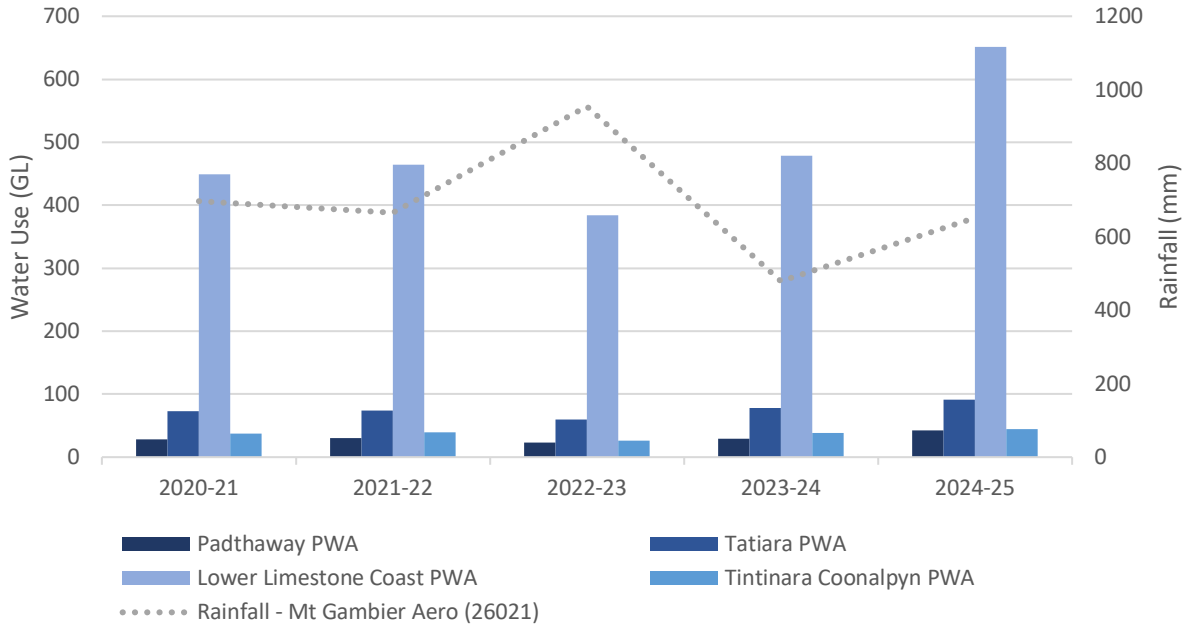


Figure 11. Annual rainfall and groundwater use in the Limestone Coast region

Water resource condition and trends

Groundwater level status and trends for Limestone Coast prescribed water resource areas are shown in Table 2. In the Lower Limestone Coast the unconfined aquifer levels in the Highlands are the lowest on record, while other aquifer levels are below average. In Padthaway, water levels are below average in the Flats, while levels across the Range are average. In Tatiara, groundwater levels are lowest on record for both the confined aquifer and the Plains and very much below average for the Highlands. In Tintinara–Coonalpyn, the Highlands and Plains are very much below average and below average respectively. Groundwater levels for the Tintinara–Coonalpyn confined aquifer are average.

Groundwater salinity trends are stable, apart from in the Padthaway Flats unconfined aquifer, which continues to increase.

The only prescribed surface water, Morambro Creek, has continued to decline for all measures (Table 3).

Rainfall trends in the Lower Limestone Coast prescribed area are stable. Rainfall trends remain downward in the other 3 prescribed areas.

The monitoring network for the groundwater-dependent ecosystem has recently been expanded and investigations are underway to better understand water availability for groundwater-dependent ecosystems. After being closed for much of the last two years, Ewens Ponds was recently reopened for snorkelling on 1 December 2025. However, Piccaninnie Ponds remains closed for immersive water activities to allow for the regeneration of aquatic vegetation and fauna species following an outbreak of filamentous algae. Further scientific investigations are being undertaken to better understand the mechanisms behind the changes in the karst springs.




Table 2. Condition of Limestone Coast prescribed groundwater resources

Lower Limestone Coast	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Confined Aquifer			
Unconfined Aquifer Lowlands[#]			
Unconfined Aquifer Highlands[#]			

<i>Padthaway</i>	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Unconfined Aquifer Flats			
Unconfined Aquifer Range			
<i>Tatiara</i>	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Confined Aquifer			
Unconfined Aquifer Highlands			
Unconfined Aquifer Plains			
<i>Tintinara–Coonalpyn</i>	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Confined Aquifer			
Unconfined Aquifer Mallee Highlands			
Unconfined Aquifer Plains			

The ‘Highlands Unconfined Aquifer’ is representative of the Comaum, Joanna, Zone 5A, Hynam East, Frances, Beeamma, Bangham and Western Flat groundwater management areas. All other groundwater management areas are represented by ‘Unconfined Aquifer Lowlands.’
Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.
Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025.
Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1970-71 to 2025 at Marcollat (#26017) weather station (for Padthaway prescribed area), Keith (#25507) weather station (for Tatiara), Tintinara (#25514) weather station (for Tintinara–Coonalpyn) and Mount Gambier (#26021) weather station for the Lower Limestone Coast.

Table 3. Condition of Limestone Coast prescribed surface water resources

<i>Morambro Creek</i>	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
Morambro Creek			

Streamflow = Trend in annual streamflow (July to June) over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Morambro Creek (A2390531) streamflow monitoring site.
Flow days = Trend in number of flowing days 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Morambro Creek (A2390531).
Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1986 to 2025 at Frances (#26007) weather station.

Water security summary

Declining trends in both groundwater and surface water resources highlight the need for a resource management response. There is an opportunity to address these issues through the review and amendment of the region’s water allocation plans.

A review of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan, completed in October 2023, found that the plan requires amendment. This amendment process is currently underway. Some of the key focus areas identified in the review are listed below:

- Revision of sustainable allocations
- Improving environmental provisions
- Supporting water trade and the water market
- Reducing plan complexity
- Aligning the plan with legislation.

DEW has completed groundwater models for parts of the Lower Limestone Coast to assist in amendment of the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan.

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The amendment of the Padthaway WAP commenced in 2019 to introduce some key changes to the way water is managed and administered in the Padthaway Prescribed Wells Area (PWA). Following statutory public consultation in 2023, the revised plan was approved in May 2025. The plan includes adaptive management principles that will allow groundwater extraction to be managed in response to changes in resource conditions.

The Tatiara WAP is currently being amended. The draft plan includes principles for adaptive management of groundwater, similar to the Padthaway plan.

The Tintinara-Coonalpyn Water Allocation Plan is currently under review. This review is required to be completed by the end of 2026. A review does not produce a revised Plan; an amendment process is required to achieve this.

The Adaptation of the South-Eastern Drainage System Under a Changing Climate project, completed in December 2025, focused on adaptation of the South-Eastern drainage system to retain and redirect water in the landscape to mitigate risks and build resilience for the benefit of primary industries and the environment. This project was jointly funded by the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund, the Limestone Coast Landscape Board and the Government of South Australia. The project findings are presented in 5 reports which cover interactions between surface water, groundwater and ecological systems and the extent of the seawater in vulnerable coastal aquifers. The final reports can be found [here](#).

Enabling forecast population and industry growth in Bordertown and Mount Gambier remains a major focus for SA Water. Key initiatives include major new water storage infrastructure for Bordertown by 2028, as well as water source augmentation investigations for Bordertown and Mount Gambier, supported by input from DEW. SA Water has also commenced the development of a 50-year Limestone Coast Water Strategy for regulated customers.

Murraylands and Riverland

The Murraylands and Riverland region covers approximately 54,000 square kilometres supporting a population of nearly 70,000 people. Average annual rainfall ranges from 400 mm in the south to 200 mm in the north.

The River Murray is the main source of surface water for water users and communities along the river itself. The River Murray is also a significant source of water for Adelaide and country towns across South Australia, including the regional townships of Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Woomera, Kadina, Murray Bridge and Keith (see Figure 2 for location of major pipelines that transport River Murray water).

Most of the wetlands in the region are reliant on regular floods or environmental watering to maintain health. There are 3 Ramsar wetlands of international importance: Banrock Station, Riverland and the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland. There are 14 wetlands of national importance in the Murraylands and Riverland region. The river is a highly regulated system with many locks and weirs to manage movement through the system.

Groundwater is also an important source of water in the Mallee.

Prescribed water resources in the Murraylands and Riverland region are managed under 4 separate WAPs:

- River Murray
- Mallee
- Peake, Roby and Sherlock
- Marne Saunders.

The location of the prescribed areas (which align with WAP boundaries) are shown in Figure 12.

River Murray

Metropolitan Adelaide, country towns and irrigation water use

The majority of consumptive water sourced from the River Murray is used for irrigation, which in 2024-25 was 521 GL. This figure includes water pumped for irrigation in the Murraylands and Riverland region as well as water supplied to the Barossa, Clare and Mount Lofty Ranges areas. In 2024-25, 218 GL of River Murray water was used to supply Metropolitan Adelaide and country towns.

South Australia continues to comply with its sustainable diversion limit requirements under the Basin Plan. The current long-term average sustainable diversion limit in South Australia is 543.5 GL per year. The total volume of River Murray water used for irrigation, country town use and Metropolitan Adelaide use has ranged from 425 GL to 739 GL¹⁰ over the past 10 years since 2015-16 (Figure 13). Interstate water trade and the ability to carry over unused water are important features of the River Murray management framework, which ensures that enough water is available for consumptive purposes to support high-value production and economic growth.

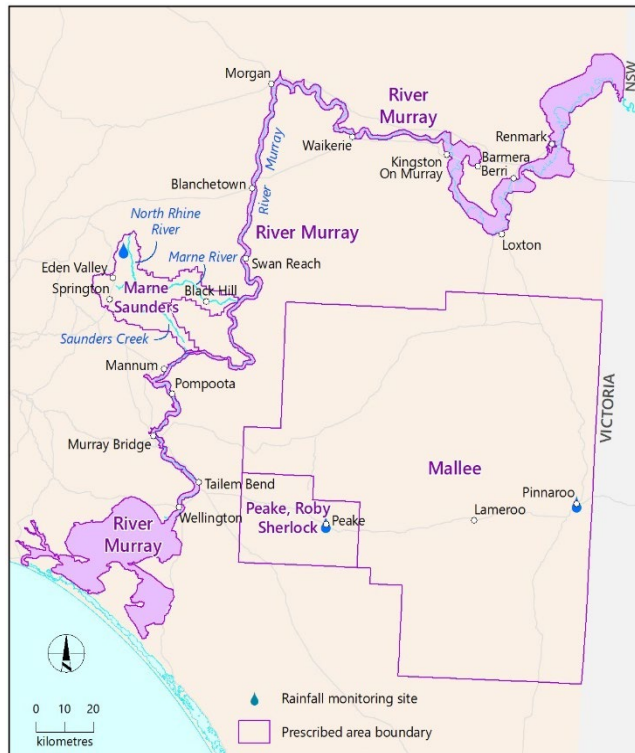


Figure 12. Prescribed areas in the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board area.

¹⁰ Includes interstate water trade to South Australia

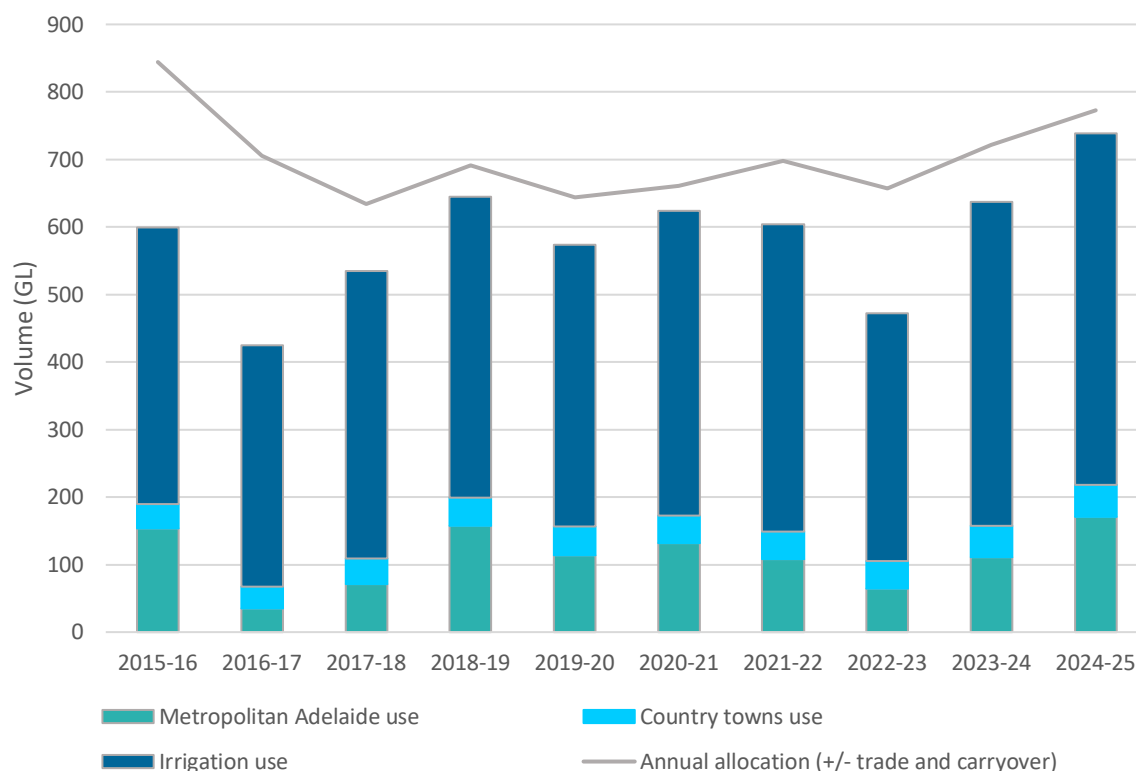


Figure 13. Volume of River Murray water used in South Australia for irrigation, country towns and Metropolitan Adelaide¹¹

Delivery of environmental water

A significant portion of River Murray water that passes into South Australia must be used for the benefit of the environment in accordance with the Basin Plan. The delivery of water for the environment to South Australia in the 2024-25 water year was guided by the [Water for the Environment Annual Plan for the South Australian River Murray](#), the *Long-Term Environmental Watering Plan for the South Australian River Murray water resource plan area* and the *Basin-Wide Environmental Watering Strategy*. These documents, together with site-based management plans, describe key ecological targets and objectives for annual delivery of water for the environment to South Australia. Water for the environment delivered to South Australia is provided by several environmental water holders including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, The Living Murray program, the South Australian Minister for Climate, Environment and Water and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder.

The 2024-25 water year saw warm and dry climatic conditions across the Murray-Darling Basin (BOM, 2025), following moderate conditions in 2023-24. South Australia received its full Entitlement throughout 2024-25 and deferred a small volume of its Entitlement for delivery in a future year (see Water Security Summary section for further detail). South Australia did not experience any unregulated flow events, and the only water SA received above Entitlement was from trade and the delivery of water for the environment.

Flows to South Australia remained below 20,000 megalitres per day (ML/d) for the entire year, peaking on 25 October 2024 at 18,000 ML/day at the South Australian border.

In total, approximately 1,394 GL of water for the environment was delivered to South Australia.

Environmental watering actions in 2024-25 included:

- Chowilla Floodplain – water for the environment was pumped to five wetlands (Coombool Swamp, Brandy Bottle, Lake Littra, Werta Wert Wetland and Lake Limbra), inundating 700 ha
- Pike Floodplain – Pike Regulator operated to 15.1 m AHD, inundating 335 ha, and water for the environment was pumped to two wetlands (Tanyaca Horseshoe floodplain and Mundic Wetland), inundating an additional 66 ha
- Katarapko Floodplain – the Splash regulator operated to 12.0 m AHD, inundating 125 ha

¹¹ Basic Rights are not included in irrigation, country town and Metropolitan Adelaide use totals. Approximately 6 GL per year is assigned to Basic Rights.

- management of over 90 permanent and ephemeral wetlands, providing important habitat for a range of species including some threatened species. Management is undertaken by a number of organisations including DEW, Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board, Australian Landscape Trust, Accolade Wines and Renmark Irrigation Trust
- the Southern Connected Basin spring-summer multisite event saw SA receive return flows from a number of upstream sources including Hume Dam, the Victorian tributaries (Goulburn, Loddon, Campaspe and Broken Rivers) and the Murrumbidgee River. A delayed start to the multisite action saw flows to SA drop to 3,280 ML/d in late September 2024 but once the multi-site commenced, the main channel of the River Murray in SA benefited from a small in-channel spring pulse of between 10,000 and 18,000 ML/day between mid-October and mid-December
- year-round management of water levels in the Lower Lakes and barrage operations, including targeted releases of water for the environment from Lake Victoria between December 2024 and April 2025 to supplement barrage flows and maintain connectivity and healthy estuarine conditions in the Coorong and Lower Lakes. Between July 2024 and June 2025, approximately 894 GL was released out of the barrages and seasonal water level fluctuations in the Lower Lakes were managed between 0.55 m AHD and 0.85 m AHD, with this water level envelope designed to protect threatened fish, frog and waterbird habitat in Lower Lakes wetlands.

The management and delivery of environmental water in 2024-25 was in accordance with the Basin annual watering priorities and Basin Plan requirements. Specific information about the delivery of water for the environment and the associated outcomes from various site-based and system scale actions will be reported in the South Australian River Murray Water for the Environment Report 2024-25 (DEW in prep.).




Water resource condition and trends

Irrigation, regulation and river management (operation of dams, locks and weirs) significantly influence streamflow patterns in the River Murray; for this reason, different indicators are shown in Table 4Table 4.

Allocation (the delivery and availability of South Australia’s Entitlement) and salinity (achievement of salinity targets at sites defined in the Basin Plan) have been adopted as measures of water quantity and quality. South Australia’s full Entitlement under the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement was delivered, and salinity remained below the Basin Salinity Target and South Australian End of Valley Targets, except for one short period where the End of Valley Target was exceeded at the SA Border site.

Rainfall across the Murray–Darling Basin has declined over the period 1900 to 2021 and is expected to continue declining in coming years.

Table 4. Delivery of allocations and water condition of the River Murray

River Murray	Allocation	Salinity	Rainfall
River Murray			

Allocation = Availability and delivery of South Australia’s Entitlement of 1850 GL in 2024-25.

Salinity = Salinity target detailed in Basin Salinity Management 2030 – South Australia’s Status Report 2023-24 [2023-24-Basin-Salinity-Management-2030-Annual-Status-Report.pdf](#).

Rainfall = Trend reported in *Trends and historical conditions in the Murray–Darling Basin. A report prepared for the Murray–Darling Basin Authority by the Bureau of Meteorology, 2020. Date range 1900 to 2021.*

Water security summary

In relation to the Murray–Darling Basin, climate projections indicate that significant drying may occur in the southern Murray–Darling Basin, potentially bringing more frequent droughts, increased temperatures and evaporation, below-average rainfall and reductions in stream flows.

To proactively prepare for dry times, South Australia uses Schedule G of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement to defer a portion of its annual Entitlement for delivery in future dry years to provide critical human water needs and private carryover for irrigators. South Australia is continuing to defer portions of its Entitlement to build the volume stored under Schedule G. More [information](#) can be found on the Department for Environment and Water website.

The Government of South Australia is continuing to work with a number of local governments to link non-potable demands in council areas to alternative water sources, thereby reducing local governments’ reliance on SA Water mains water and hence River Murray water. Several South Australian councils are sharing in almost \$32 million of Australian Government funding under the South Australian Alternative Water Supply Efficiency Measures (AWSEM) Program to boost water savings in the Murray–Darling Basin. New stormwater harvesting, upgraded infrastructure networks and an expanded water capture basin in Adelaide’s north are among the measures set to be rolled out by the end of 2027. The program will generate up to 1,890 ML of water savings across the six projects and contribute 1,769 ML of South Australian River Murray High Security entitlements towards the Basin Plan’s 450 GL water target to enhance environmental outcomes for the Murray–Darling Basin. The AWSEM Program is funded through the Australian

Government Resilient Rivers Program, which supports initiatives to improve and modernise water delivery infrastructure and reduce water losses in the Basin. The Government of South Australia will run the program in partnership with South Australian local government authorities and other stakeholders.

In the Riverland, Loxton and Waikerie will benefit from water security improvements as part of the Australian Government's National Water Grid Water Infrastructure for Sustainable and Efficient Regions (WISER) initiative. Funding has been secured to promote the use of recycled water through the upgrade of the Waikerie and Loxton Wastewater Treatment Plants.

Given that rainfall is expected to decline across the entire Murray–Darling Basin, full implementation of the Basin Plan remains critical for the water security of all regions that rely on the supply of River Murray water. South Australia has made significant progress towards full implementation of the Basin Plan including:

- implementing new Sustainable Diversion Limits for surface water and groundwater that came into effect from 1 July 2019; all associated water recovery targets have been met
- all 3 water resource plans submitted on time and accredited by the Commonwealth Minister
- all Sustainable Diversion Limits Adjustment Mechanism projects for which South Australia has lead responsibility are either complete or on schedule for operational completion by the Basin Plan deadline of 31 December 2026
- efficiency measures projects that contribute towards completion of the recovery of the final 450 GL of water for the environment
- continuing to work with a range of partners and water holders to coordinate the effective delivery of water to our priority assets to achieve our short and long-term environmental outcomes in South Australia.

River Murray flood recovery

The 2022-23 River Murray flood was the largest flood on the River Murray in South Australia for more than 60 years. The River Murray flood event damaged or overtopped 20 of the 27 levee banks in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area (LMRIA) and inundated the primary production land behind the levees. The inundation also impacted other assets essential to the state, such as infrastructure for drinking water, telecommunications, electricity and transport routes. As part of the State Government's River Murray flood recovery response, immediate stabilisation works were undertaken to repair the damaged levees so the inundated areas could be dewatered.

Further remediation work to the flood-damaged sections of the levees is progressing with the state and Australian governments jointly funding \$17.1 million for the state government-owned levees and \$14.2 million for the privately owned levees. The non-engineered remediation works will return significantly flood-damaged sections of the levees to their pre-flood height (equivalent to the 1974 flood level for government levees) and help to mitigate the effects of high-flow events on agricultural land. As of 26 February 2026, remediation work has been completed on 6 government-owned levees, with works for a further 2 government-owned levees expected to be completed by the end of June 2026. For privately owned levees, works are completed for one levee, in-progress at another levee and will be progressively undertaken until late 2026.

Mallee, Peake, Roby and Sherlock, and Marne Saunders

Water use

Since 2020-21, licensed extraction of groundwater in the Mallee, Peake, Roby and Sherlock, and Marne Saunders prescribed areas has ranged from 28.9 GL to 45.3 GL per year (Figure 14). Rainfall varies across the 3 prescribed areas. Rainfall data for the Mallee (Pinnaroo weather station) is displayed in Figure 14 to demonstrate the relationship between rainfall and water use. In general, water use patterns reflect rainfall trends: less water is used in higher rainfall years compared to lower rainfall years.

The annual volume of surface water used in the Marne Saunders prescribed area since 2020-21 has ranged from approximately 0.2 GL to 0.5 GL. As with all surface water resources, water can only be accessed when dams and watercourses hold sufficient water.

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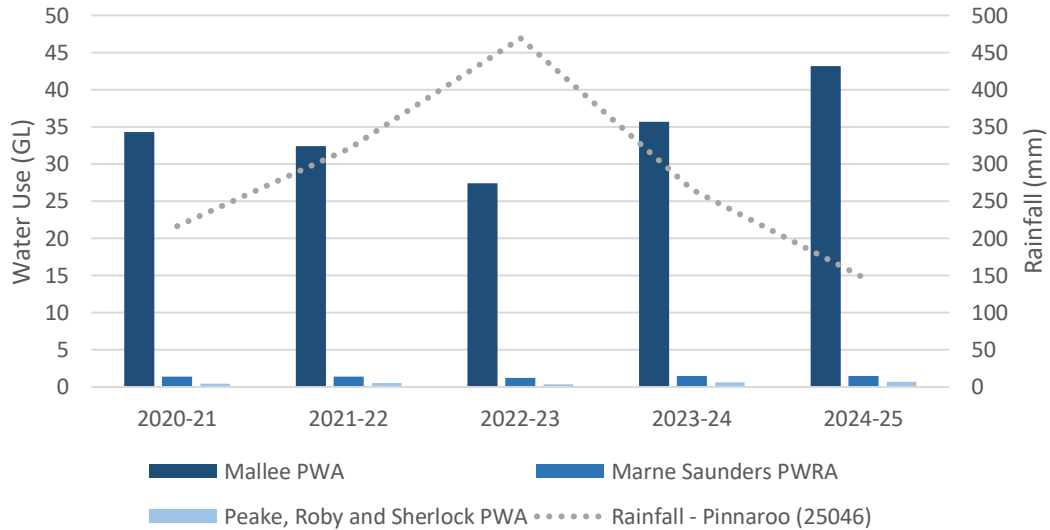


Figure 14. Annual rainfall and groundwater use in the Murraylands and Riverland region

Water resource condition and trends

Generally, groundwater level status is below average in the Murraylands and Riverland region. In the Mallee, the Murray Group Limestone aquifer is below average, with salinity and rainfall trends stable. The confined aquifer in the Peake, Roby and Sherlock prescribed area is above average. Marne Saunders fractured rock aquifers are very much below average. The salinity of groundwater in the region is stable in all areas (Table 5Table 5). Streamflow and number of flow days in the Marne River and Saunders Creek are showing a declining trend (Table 6Table 6). Rainfall is stable in the Mallee area and declining elsewhere.

Table 5. Condition of Murraylands and Riverland prescribed groundwater resources

Mallee	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Murray Group Limestone			
Peake, Roby and Sherlock	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Confined Aquifer			
Marne Saunders	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock Aquifers			
Murray Group Limestone			

Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025.

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1979-80 to 2025 at Pinnaroo (#25015) weather station (for Mallee prescribed area), Peake (#25513) weather station (for Peake, Roby and Sherlock). Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1973-74 to 2025 at Keyneton (#23725) weather station (for Marne Saunders).

Table 6. Condition of Marne Saunders prescribed surface water resources

Marne Saunders	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
Marne River	↓	↓	↓
Saunders Creek	↓	↓	↓

Streamflow = Trend in annual streamflow (July to June) over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 at the Marne Gorge (A4260605) and the Saunders Creek (A4261174) streamflow monitoring sites.

Flow Days = Trend in number of flowing days 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Marne Gorge (A4260605) and the Saunders Creek (A4261174) streamflow monitoring sites.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1974 to 2025 for Keyneton (#23725).

Water security summary

Mallee

The declining water level trend being observed in the Mallee prescribed area is within the limits permitted under the Mallee WAP. Due to the slow moving, robust nature of the aquifer and large amount of storage in the Murray Group limestone aquifer, extraction of the full volume permitted under the WAP will lead to a depletion of 15% of the total resource volume of water in storage after 300 years.

In line with statutory requirements, a 10-year review of the Mallee WAP was completed in 2022, and the amendment process is underway. A numerical groundwater model capable of testing extraction scenarios and information gathered as part of the review is being used to amend the WAP to better suit the community and improve the prescribed wells area for future generations.

Peake, Roby, and Sherlock

The ten-year review of the Peake, Roby and Sherlock WAP was completed in 2021, and the amendment process is underway.

Marne Saunders

The Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board commenced an out-of-cycle review of the water allocation plan in 2024. This was triggered by sustained community concern about the observed deterioration of water resources in the Marne Saunders area.

Recent analysis has confirmed a step change decline in rainfall, surface water flows and groundwater recharge associated with long-term climate change and recent severe drought conditions. These changes are associated with declines in habitat condition.

Analysis also shows a shift in the rainfall–runoff relationship, with less runoff generated for a given amount of rainfall. These changes mean that the assumptions underpinning the current plan need to be revised. The review is expected to be completed in 2026.

Hills and Fleurieu

The Hills and Fleurieu region covers 6,700 square kilometres of land, ocean and offshore islands, including approximately 170 km of coastline. The region is home to around 130,000 people.

Groundwater and surface water underpin the region’s agricultural productivity, public water supply for Adelaide and local communities and water dependent ecosystems. These ecosystems include significant wetlands such as Fleurieu Swamps and parts of the Ramsar-listed Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland.

The Mount Lofty Ranges separate the Adelaide Plains from the extensive plains that surround the River Murray. For the purpose of water resource management, the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (EMLR) incorporate the eastern slopes of the Mount Lofty Ranges and the Murray Plains, as well as the Angas Bremer PWA. Ground and surface waters are managed under the EMLR WAP.

The Western Mount Lofty Ranges (WMLR) prescribed area incorporates the western slopes of the Mount Lofty Ranges and extends down to the Fleurieu Peninsula. The WMLR’s water sources are managed under 2 WAPs:

- WMLR
- McLaren Vale.

The McLaren Vale WAP manages groundwater only. The WMLR WAP manages surface and groundwater. Rivers that extend across the Adelaide Plains (Gawler, Little Para, Torrens and Onkaparinga) are managed under the WMLR WAP.

The location of the EMLR, Angas Bremer and WMLR prescribed resources are shown in Figure 15 (the location of the McLaren Vale PWA is provided in Figure 18).

Mount Lofty Ranges

Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges water use

Since 2020-21, the total annual volume of licensed extraction in the EMLR has ranged from 9.1 GL to 14.4 GL (Figure 16). Groundwater is the predominant water source in the EMLR. Since 2020-21, 81% of water extracted has come from groundwater and 19% from surface water.

In general, annual water use patterns reflect annual rainfall trends: less water is used in higher rainfall years compared to lower rainfall years. Annual rainfall data for Mount Barker is displayed in Figure 16 to demonstrate the relationship between rainfall and water use.

The Angas Bremer PWA falls within the boundary of the EMLR. In this region the use of groundwater is low (on average 1.3 GL per year since 2020-21) compared to the volume of River Murray water used. River Murray water is delivered to the area via pipelines connected to Lake Alexandrina and higher reaches of the River Murray. In the 2024-25 water use year, the Creeks Pipeline Company Limited supplied 16 GL of River Murray water to townships, communities and irrigators in Langhorne and Currency creeks. This was largest volume of water delivered on record.



Figure 15. Prescribed areas in the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board area

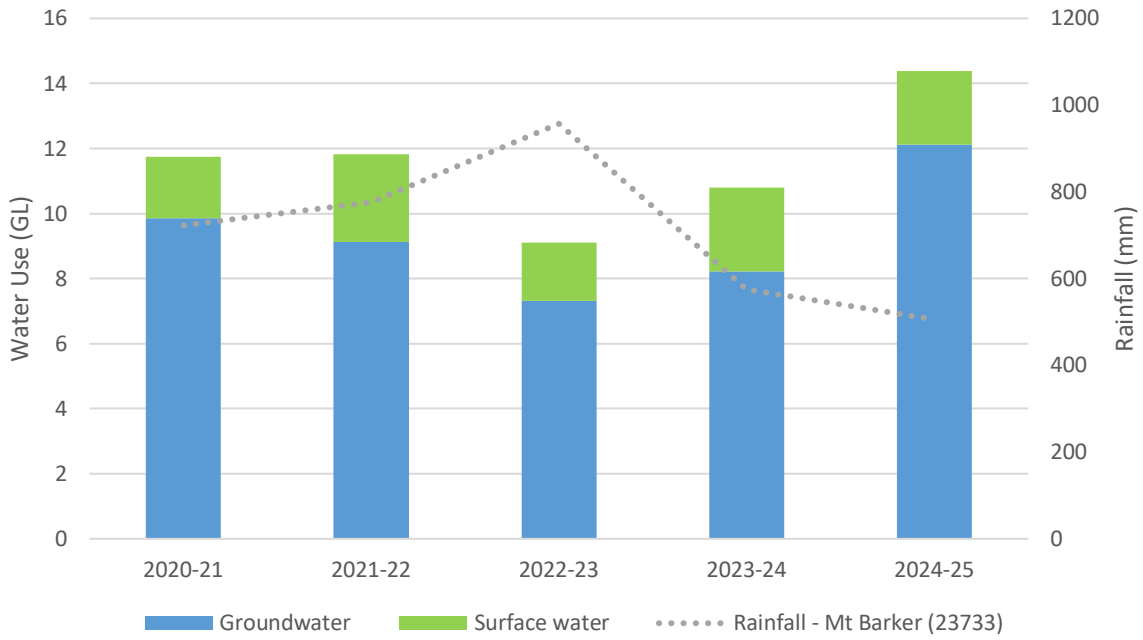


Figure 16. Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges annual rainfall and water use¹²

Western Mount Lofty Ranges water use

Since 2020-21, the total annual volume of licensed extraction in the WMLR has ranged from 66.0 GL to 123.4 GL (Figure 17). Surface water is the predominant water source in the WMLR. Since 2020-21, 83% of all water used is surface water. The volume of surface water used in the WMLR is influenced by its role in Adelaide’s public water supply. When reservoirs in the WMLR are holding sufficient water, they are used as a source of public water supply in preference to water from the River Murray or the Adelaide Desalination Plant. Over the past 5 years, in line with fluctuating rainfall totals, between 6% and 67% of Adelaide’s mains water has been sourced from the WMLR reservoirs (Figure 7). In 2024-25, following two dry seasons, 10.1 GL (6% of Adelaide’s public water supply demand) was met by WMLRs reservoirs.

¹² Groundwater totals include EMLR and Angas Bremer groundwater use. Surface water totals represent the volume of EMLR surface water used in the region (meaning that River Murray water use is not included).

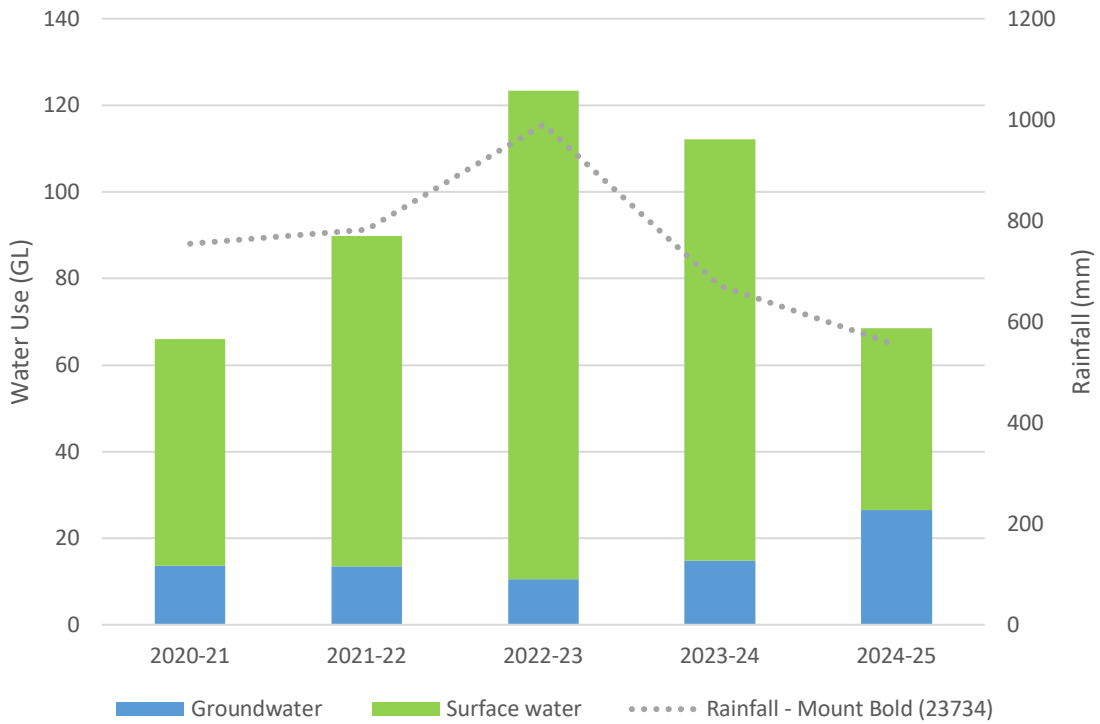


Figure 17. Western Mount Lofty Ranges annual rainfall and water use




Water resource condition and trends

Rainfall (Table 7Table 7 and Table 8Table 8) in the Mount Lofty Ranges over the period 1986 to 2025 is showing 2 distinct trends: stable in the EMLR and declining in the WMLR.

Groundwater levels (Table 7Table 7) in the Angas Bremer and EMLR are average or above average, except for the Permian Sand Tookayerta which is very much below average. In the WMLR, groundwater levels of the Fractured Rock aquifer are below average, with the Permian Sand and Tertiary Limestone aquifers being ranked as average and below average respectively. Salinity is stable in most groundwater resources but increasing in the EMLR Murray Group Limestone.

Table 7. Condition of Mount Lofty prescribed groundwater resources

Angas Bremer	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Murray Group Limestone			
EMLR	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock			
Murray Group Limestone			
Permian Sand Finnis			
Permian Sand Tookayerta			

WMLR	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock		—	—
Permian Sand		NA	↓
Tertiary Limestone		NA	↓

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.
Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity (January to December) over period 2013 to 2025 for Angas Bremer Murray Group Limestone and WMLR Fractured Rock, 2014 to 2025 for EMLR fractured rock, 2017 to 2025 for EMLR Permian Sand Finnis and EMLR Permian Sand Tookayerta, and from 2009 to 2025 for EMLR Murray Group Limestone.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1976-77 to 2025 at Langhorne Creek (#24515) weather station (for Angas-Bremer). Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1976-77 to 2025 at Mount Barker (#23733) weather station (for EMLR). Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1973-74 to 2025 at Mount Bold (#23734) weather station (for WMLR Fractured Rock) and Hindmarsh Valley (#23823) weather station (for WMLR Permian Sands and Tertiary Limestone).

Streamflow (Table 8Table 8) has a declining trend for rivers in the EMLR, while the number of flowing days is stable. In the WMLR, streamflows are showing declining trends. The trends in the number of flowing days are decreasing, except for the Yankalilla, which is stable.

Table 8. Condition of Mount Lofty prescribed surface water resources

EMLR	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
Angas River	↓	—	—
Bremer River	↓	—	—
Finniss River	↓	—	—
Currency Creek	↓	—	—
WMLR	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
Torrens	↓	↓	↓
Onkaparinga	↓	↓	— ↓ *
Myponga	↓	↓	↓
Yankalilla	↓	—	↓

Streamflow = Trend in annual streamflow (July to June) over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 at monitoring sites for Finniss River (A4260504), Currency Creek (A4260530), Bremer River (A4260533), Angas River (A4260503) streamflow monitoring sites – EMLR. Trend in streamflow over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 for Kersbrook (A5040525), and Mount Pleasant (A5040512) for Torrens Catchment; Scott Creek (A5030502) and Bakers Gully (A5030503) for Onkaparinga Catchment; Myponga (A5020502), and Yankalilla (A5011006) for Myponga, and Yankalilla catchments, respectively.

Flow days = Trend in number of flowing days 1986-87 to 2024-25 at sites described above.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1986 to 2025 at Mount Barker (#23733) weather station (for EMLR) and Mount Bold (#23734) weather station (for WMLR).

*The trend in streamflow is stable for Scott Creek and declining for Bakers Gully.

Water security summary

The declining surface water trends presented above highlight that there are some water security risks in the Mount Lofty region. There is a need for a resource management response to address these declining trends and this may be achieved through the amendment of the Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges WAPs. The review was completed in early 2024 and found that both plans require significant amendments with some of the key learnings listed below:

- water-dependent ecosystems are declining in many parts of the region due to reductions in volume and changes in the timing of flows caused by water storages and water diversions

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- water resources are overallocated in many areas
- groundwater resources are currently stable in most areas
- First Nations' involvement in planning processes is crucial for progress
- more information and new approaches need to be explored to manage forestry and stock and domestic water use in the future
- climate change is influencing the timing and quantity of rainfall, which requires updated data and methods.

The WAP amendment process is underway and expected to conclude in 2029. It will involve a significant investment in new water science to improve knowledge and understanding of the water resources. Deliberative engagement with water users and other stakeholders will ensure new policy settings are appropriate and well informed.

To ensure ecologically sustainable water resource management, there will also be a need to review progress associated with the provision of low flows (environmental flows) from farm dams¹³ and at watercourse diversion points. Low flows are small flow events in creeks and rivers that create or maintain water flow through the channel, keeping in-stream habitats wet and pools topped up throughout the year, especially over summer and autumn. Low flows are critical to ecosystems that depend on water. Programs have been underway to secure low flows since the adoption of the current WAPs (DEW 2024). To date, low flows are released at more than 400 sites in the Mount Lofty Ranges, including the Marne Saunders region.

¹³ Across the Mount Lofty Ranges there are more than 22,500 dams, which play a crucial role capturing and storing water for livestock, irrigation and domestic purposes.

McLaren Vale

McLaren Vale is a distinctive region of high productivity where groundwater and recycled water are important water resources. Currently the groundwater in the McLaren Vale and Willunga Basin area is managed in the *McLaren Vale Water Allocation Plan* while the surface waters of this region are managed by the *Western Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan*. Both Water Allocation Plans have been reviewed, with the processes concluding groundwater and surface water resource management should be integrated, in the Western Mount Lofty Ranges WAP. This amalgamation will take effect when a new *Western Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan* is approved.

The location of the McLaren Vale prescribed area is shown in Figure 18. Recycled water sourced from the Christies Beach, Aldinga, Sellicks Beach and Willunga Wastewater Treatment Plants is an important water source for the region. More than half of the water used in the region is recycled wastewater.

Water use

Since 2020-21, licensed groundwater extraction has ranged from 3.4 GL to 4.2 GL. Over the same period, the use of recycled water has ranged from 4.5 GL to 6.2 GL (Figure 19).

Recycled water on average makes up 58% of the water used in the McLaren Vale region. Rainfall data for Willunga is also displayed in Figure 19, which allows a comparison to be made between water use and rainfall.



Figure 18. McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Areas in the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board area

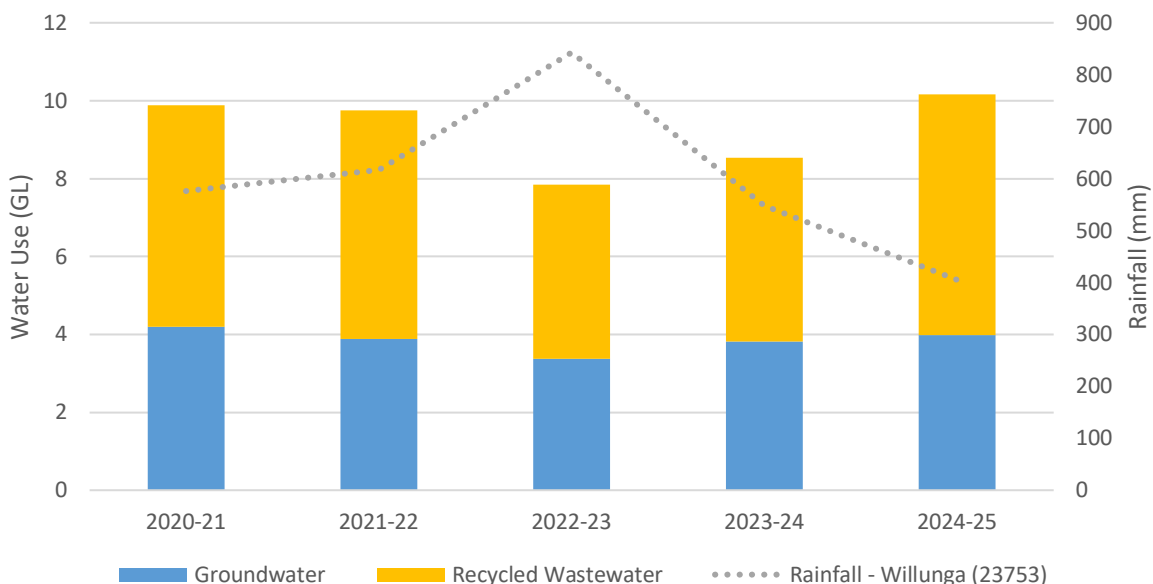











Figure 19. McLaren Vale annual rainfall and water use

Water resource condition and trends

Groundwater levels (Table 9) in aquifers of the McLaren Vale region are below-average in the Fractured Rock aquifer, very much below average in the Maslin Sands Aquifer and lowest on record in the Port Willunga Formation

aquifer. Salinity levels are stable in the Port Willunga Formation and Fractured Rock aquifers but are showing an upward trend in the Maslins Sands aquifer. The long-term rainfall trend is stable.

Table 9. Condition of McLaren Vale prescribed groundwater resources

McLaren Vale	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock			
Maslin Sands			
Port Willunga Formation			

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.

Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2009 to 2025.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1979-80 to 2025 at Willunga (#23753) weather station.

Water security summary

McLaren Vale is a region where existing water supplies of a suitable quality are likely to be insufficient to meet demand in the future, especially with a changing climate. Rising groundwater salinity has been identified as posing a high risk in some localised areas. The Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board is working with the affected licence holders to identify appropriate methods to stabilise and reduce the salinity in future. Discussions have been held with groundwater licence holders in these ‘hot spot’ zones to identify and implement solutions to localised rising salinity levels.

Working in partnership with key stakeholders and community members, DEW led the development of the *McLaren Vale Regional Water Security Strategy* in the McLaren Vale region. Workshops were held throughout 2023 and 2024, supported and informed by an economic and options analysis. The draft Strategy went out for public consultation in mid-2025 and was released in February 2026. The strategy identifies potential water supply options and sources of demand and details possible investment staging to assist in long-term planning for the region.

Alongside the development of a water security strategy, investigations have been undertaken to determine the viability of constructing a new reservoir to increase the storage and distribution capacity of the existing recycled water distribution network. This would enable additional recycled water to be made available during the peak irrigation season. An initial business case, funded by the Australian Government through the National Water Grid Fund, was completed in 2024. Further work has since been undertaken and a funding proposal was finalised in December 2025.

There will also be an opportunity to ensure water management frameworks provide water for critical human water needs, the environment and other uses in a changing climate when the McLaren Vale WAP is amalgamated into a new *Western Mount Lofty Ranges Water Allocation Plan*. A comprehensive review of the McLaren Vale WAP was completed in 2022. The review found groundwater extraction to be well within the limits set. However, the plan requires amendment to address the following:

- First Nations’ (Kaurna) interests are not recognised
- Rising groundwater salinity has been identified as posing a high risk in some localised areas
- Small long-term downward trends in the levels of some aquifers need to be better understood
- More information is needed to understand groundwater dependent ecosystems
- Rules are not able to be set at an aquifer or management zone level
- The plan lacks a set of overarching objectives
- The current plan does not consider impacts of climate change.

Northern and Yorke

The Northern and Yorke region extends for 38,500 square kilometres. It is a varied and productive portion of South Australia and includes 1,300 km of coastline and adjacent marine areas. The region supports a population of approximately 150,000 people who reside in agricultural, coastal and urban communities. The region includes traditional Aboriginal lands of the Narungga, Nukunu, Ngadjuri, Kurna and Peramangk people.

There are 3 prescribed areas for water management that sit wholly in the region, the Clare Valley Prescribed Water Resources Area, the Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area and the Baroota Prescribed Water Resources Area.

Water on the Yorke Peninsula and most of the Mid North and Southern Flinders area is not prescribed. More information relating to this region can be found in the Non-prescribed Resources section at the end of this report.

Barossa Prescribed Water Resources

In the Barossa region, prescribed ground and surface water resources as well as water imported from the River Murray are used to meet water needs across the region. Water imported from the River Murray is the main source of water. Prescribed resources are managed through the Barossa WAP. The location of the Barossa prescribed area is shown in Figure 20.

Water Use

Since 2020-21, annual demand for prescribed groundwater use has ranged from 1.9 GL to 3.5 GL and surface water use from 1.1 GL to 1.4 GL (Figure 21). Over the same period, the use of imported River Murray water has ranged from 7.3 GL to 11.2 GL. Imported water from the River Murray, on average, makes up 70% of the water used in the Barossa region.



Figure 20. Barossa Prescribed Resources Area in the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board area

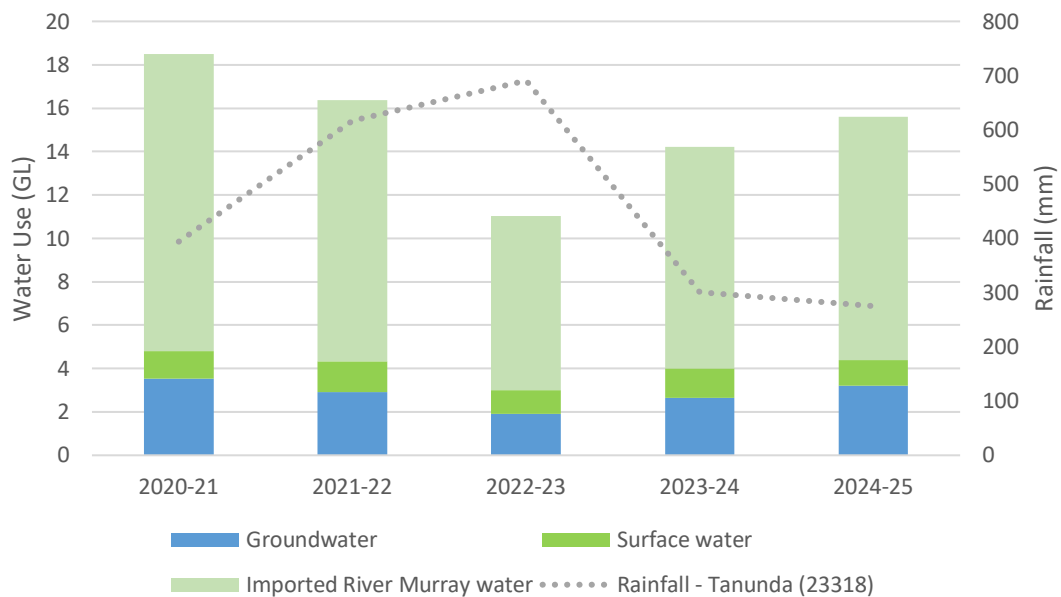











Figure 21. Barossa annual rainfall and water use

Water resource condition and trends

Below average resource conditions for groundwater level status and declining rainfall trends are observed in the Barossa region (Table 10Table 10). The Lower and Upper aquifers are very much below average, while the Fractured Rock aquifer is the lowest on record. The salinity trend of the Fractured Rock aquifer is stable but increasing in both the Upper and Lower aquifers.

Table 10. Condition of Barossa prescribed groundwater resources

Barossa	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock Aquifer			
Upper Aquifer			
Lower Aquifer			




Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.

Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2008 to 2025.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1986 to 2025 at Tanunda (#23318) weather station.

Surface water in the North Para River shows declining trends for streamflow and the number of flow days. The rainfall trend at Tanunda is decreasing (Table 11Table 11).

Table 11. Condition of Barossa prescribed surface water resources

Barossa	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
North Para River			

Streamflow = Trend in annual streamflow (July to June) over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Yaldara (A5050502) streamflow monitoring site.

Flow days = Trend in number of flowing days 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Yaldara (A5050502) streamflow monitoring site.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1986 to 2025 at Tanunda (#23318) weather station.

Water security summary

The Barossa is a region where it is likely that water supplies of a suitable quality will be insufficient to meet established demand for water. Under a mid-range climate scenario for the 2050s, it is estimated that an additional 8 GL per year (5.7 GL for Barossa Valley and 2.4 GL for Eden Valley) will be needed to ensure there is no irrigation shortfall for the existing planted area in the driest years (DEW 2022c). This increases to more than 14 GL per annum (10.2 GL for Barossa Valley and 3.8 GL for Eden Valley) for a high-end climate change projection for the 2050s (DEW 2022c).

When operational, the Barossa Wine Grape Water Source Diversification project is expected to deliver up to an extra 800 ML per annum of recycled water to the Barossa. This project is jointly funded by the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Connections Funding Pathway, the Government of South Australia, the Light Regional Council and land developers and involves the capture and reuse of stormwater from new housing developments.

Recent investigations into other alternative water supply options for the Barossa have focused on the viability of transporting treated wastewater from the Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant,¹⁴ but are yet to identify a commercially viable pathway for this option. In light of this, work is continuing on potential River Murray water supply options for Eden Valley to address imminent water security risks in that part of the region (Eden Valley is not currently connected to Barossa Infrastructure Limited’s River Murray supply network).

A draft of a revised Barossa Water Allocation Plan was also open for public consultation in late 2025 and is expected to be adopted in mid-2026.

¹⁴ e.g. see the Barossa New Water Detailed Business Case (2022) <https://cdn.environment.sa.gov.au/environment/images/BNW-DBC-Main-report.pdf>

Clare Valley Prescribed Water Resources

In the Clare Valley, prescribed ground and surface water resources, as well as water imported from the River Murray, are used to meet water needs across the region. Water imported from the River Murray is the main source of water. Prescribed resources are managed through the Clare Valley WAP. The location of the Clare Valley prescribed area is shown in Figure 22.

Water Use

Since 2020-21, annual demand for prescribed surface water has ranged from 0.2 GL to 0.7 GL, and prescribed groundwater from 0.6 GL to 1.1 GL (Figure 23). Over the same period, the use of imported River Murray water has ranged from 1.8 GL to 3.0 GL. Imported water on average makes up 66% of the water used in the Clare region. Rainfall data for Clare (Calcannia weather station) is displayed in Figure 23 to illustrate the relationship between rainfall and water use. Rainfall has been very much below average in 2023-2025.

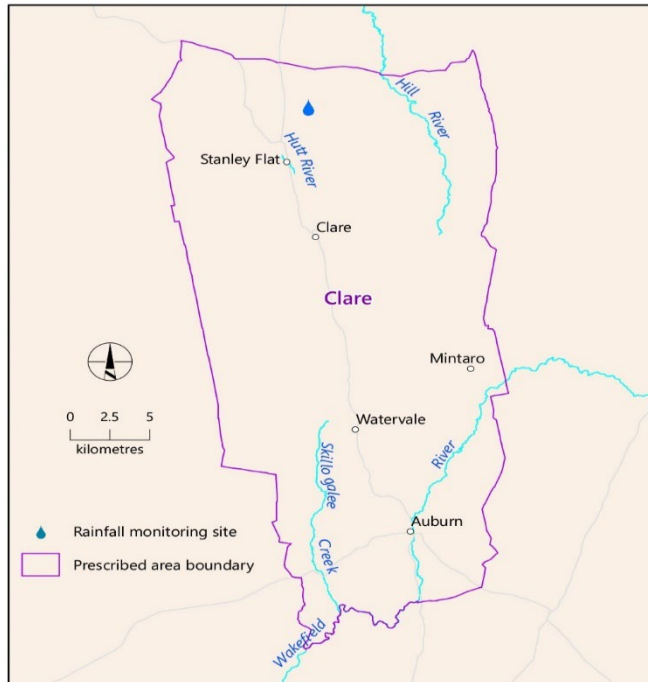


Figure 22. Clare Valley Prescribed Resource Area in the Northern and Yorke landscape Board region

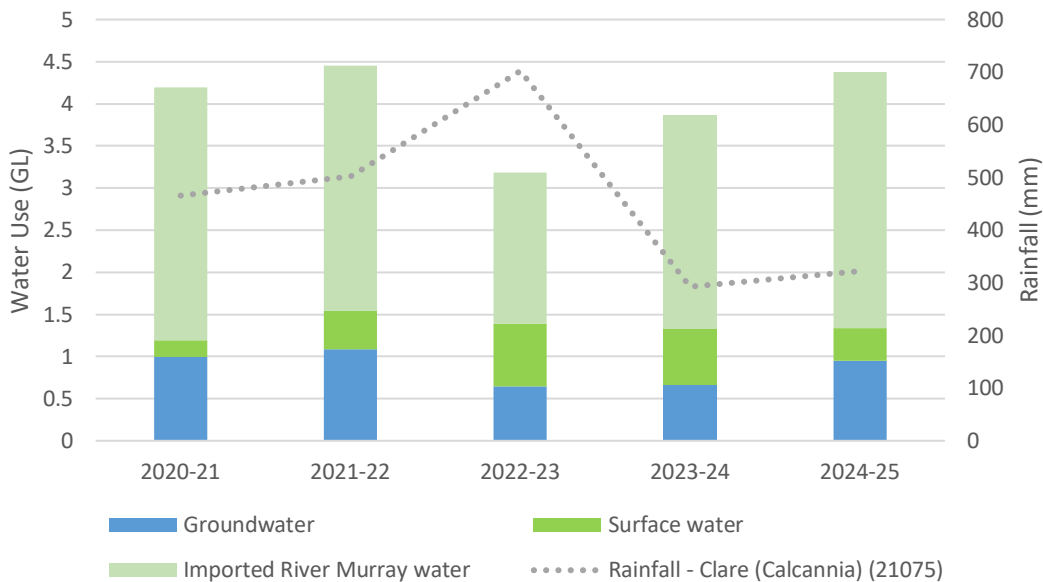





Figure 23. Clare Valley annual rainfall and water use

Water resource condition and trends

The groundwater water level status is below average and salinity remains stable. The long-term rainfall trend (1986-2025) continues to decline across the Clare Valley (Table 12).

Table 12. Condition of Clare Valley prescribed groundwater resources

Clare Valley	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Fractured Rock Aquifer			










Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.

Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1970-71 to 2025 at Clare (Calcannia) (#21075) weather station.

For surface water, Table 13 shows declining trends for streamflow and the number of flow days in the Hill River and Hutt River, while the corresponding trends remain stable in the Wakefield River.

Table 13. Condition of Clare Valley prescribed surface water resources

Clare Valley	Streamflow	Flow days	Rainfall
Wakefield River			
Hill River			
Hutt River			

Streamflow = Trend in annual streamflow (July to June) over period 1986-87 to 2024-25 at Wakefield (A5060500), Hill River (A5070500) and Hutt River (A5070501) streamflow monitoring sites.

Flow days = Trend in number of flowing days 1986-87 to 2024-25 at monitoring sites listed above.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1986 to 2025 at Clare (Calcannia) (#21075) weather station.

Water security summary

There are ongoing water security challenges in the Clare Valley related to both water availability and affordability. Further engagement is required with Clare Valley stakeholders regarding water security. An assessment of water demand and the identification of options for bringing additional water to the Clare Valley has been completed via the Australian Government funded Clare Valley Water Supply Preliminary Business Case. Australian Government funding was provided through the National Water Grid Fund.

The preliminary business case found the leading option for bringing additional water to the valley was to source additional water from the River Murray via the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline and develop storages (turkey nest dams or Bundaleer Reservoir) to store water until needed.

Work continues on the evaluation of non-infrastructure, lower-cost solutions to meet near-term demand for water in Clare. A government-industry working group has been established to progress investigations. The working group includes representatives from DEW, the Clare Valley Grape and Wine Association, SA Water and Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North. The group is currently assessing whether optimisation of the existing Clare Valley Water Supply Scheme is an economically viable solution for meeting the short to medium term water needs of Clare Valley.

In an effort to further improve catchment health, the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board is also working with landholders, farming groups and stakeholders to deliver on-ground works to improve water quality in the Wakefield River catchment in the Clare region.

The Water Allocation Plan for the Clare Valley Prescribed Water Resources Area is currently due for review by 2029. However, investigations are underway to determine whether the review process should be brought forward.

Baroota Prescribed Water Resources

The Landscape Board is finalising a draft of an inaugural Baroota Water Allocation Plan, which is scheduled to be released for public consultation in the near future. The Northern and Yorke Landscape Board received funding from the Government of South Australia’s Landscape Priorities Fund for an Environmental and Cultural Flows project in 2023-2025 that included Baroota. One of the project’s key objectives was to continue to collaborate with SA Water to deliver environmental water releases from the Baroota Reservoir. Highlights of the project included releases from Baroota reservoir for environmental (river red gums) and cultural flows benefits. Groundwater and surface water data relating to these releases was collected to help inform future management.

Port Pirie Greening Program

The Port Pirie Greening Program is funded by the Government of South Australia as part of a four-year, \$5.7 million partnership that aims to minimise lead exposure pathways, beautify the community and increase biodiversity. Tree planting, landscaping and the installation of Water Sensitive Urban Design infrastructure will be added to key central Port Pirie locations in the next stage of the Port Pirie Greening Program. Further benefits are improved visual appeal of the identified locations, increased environmental benefits and the improved health and wellbeing of the community.

Green Adelaide

The Green Adelaide region covers approximately 3,400 square kilometres supporting a population of nearly 1.36 million people. It covers most of Greater Adelaide from Sellicks Beach in the south to Virginia in the north to the hills face zone in the east.

Average annual rainfall ranges from 400 mm in the north to 800 mm in the east in the western Mount Lofty Ranges. Climate change projections suggest a decrease in average annual rainfall (decrease of 7.5 % by 2030), but an increase in high rainfall events. Groundwater is used from aquifers under the Adelaide Plains, which also have several managed aquifer recharge schemes operating. Several rivers flow out of the western Mount Lofty Ranges across the Adelaide Plains to the Gulf of St Vincent. The most important are the Little Para River, Gawler River, River Torrens / Karrawirra Pari and Onkaparinga River.

An important feature of the Green Adelaide region is the retention of natural wetlands in an urban environment and the creation of artificial wetlands to manage stormwater and recharge aquifers. All of these wetlands play an important role in cooling and greening Adelaide. Most of the wetlands in the region are reliant on regular surface water flows to maintain health. Wetlands of significance in the region include Barker Inlet and St Kilda, Cleland Perched Swamps, Onkaparinga Estuary, Port Gawler and Buckland Park Lake, and Washpool Lagoon.

Adelaide Plains

The Adelaide Plains takes in most of Adelaide. It stretches from Kangaroo Flat in the north, to the Onkaparinga River in the south, to the coast in the west, and to the top of the ‘hills face zone’ in the east.

Three separate PWAs make up the Adelaide Plains region (Northern Adelaide Plains, Dry Creek and Central Adelaide). Groundwater resources are managed under a single water allocation plan, the Adelaide Plains Water Allocation Plan. Historically groundwater extractions in the Kangaroo Flat region have been reported on separately; hence, water use and resource trends are presented separately for Kangaroo Flat and the Northern Adelaide Plains. The location of the prescribed areas is shown in Figure 24. The location of Kangaroo Flat can also be seen on the map.

Across the Adelaide Plains recycled water is also an important and climate-resilient part of the water supply mix. Over the last 5 years around 50% of all water used in the region was recycled water. Most of the water sourced from the Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant is distributed for use in agriculture via the Virginia Pipeline Scheme (VPS) and the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS). Water sourced from the Glenelg Wastewater treatment plant is used for urban greening, including watering the parklands that bound the Adelaide central business district.

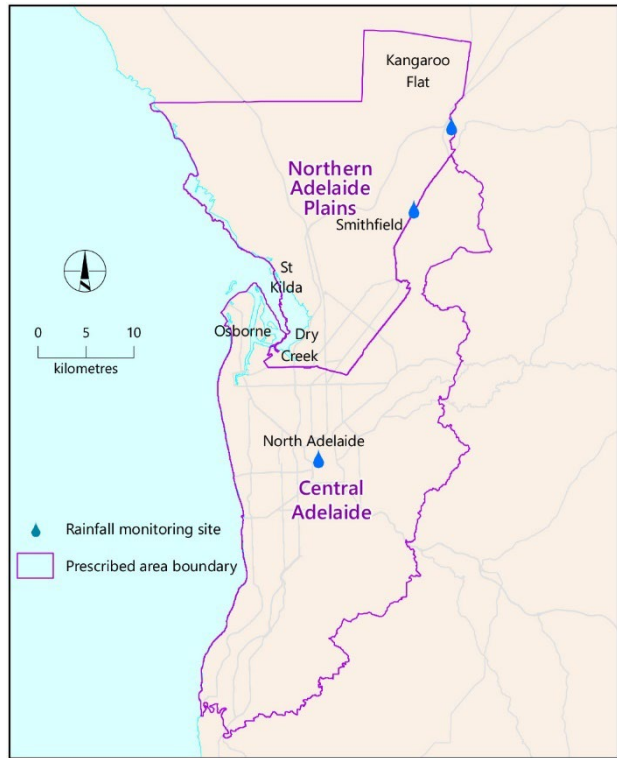


Figure 24. Map of Adelaide Plains region

Water Use

Since 2020-21, annual licensed extraction of groundwater in Dry Creek, Central Adelaide and the Northern Adelaide Plains (including the Kangaroo Flat region) has ranged from 12.7 GL to 21.2 GL (Figure 25). In general, water use patterns reflect rainfall trends: less water is used in higher rainfall years compared to lower rainfall years. The greatest volume of groundwater is used from the aquifers of the Northern Adelaide Plains. Rainfall data for Smithfield (Figure 25) is used to demonstrate the relationship between rainfall and water use. In 2024-25 rainfall was very much below average.

In 2024-25, 27.9 GL of recycled water was used in the Adelaide Plains region.

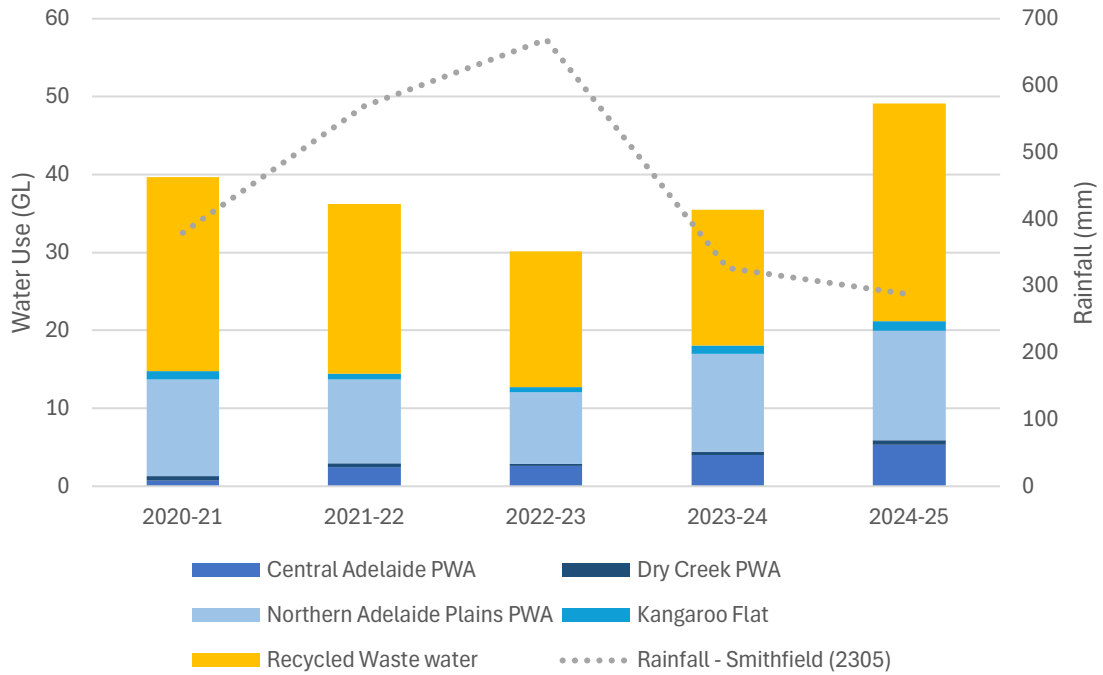


Figure 25. Adelaide Plains annual rainfall and water use.¹⁵

Water resource condition and trends

The groundwater level status in Central Adelaide T1 is above average. The status of the Kangaroo Flat T2 is below average, while the levels of the Northern Adelaide T1 and T2 are average and below average respectively. Salinity trends are stable across the region. Rainfall in the Northern Adelaide Plains and Kangaroo Flat are stable, whereas a declining rainfall trend is being observed in the Central Adelaide PWA (Table 14).

Table 14. Condition of Adelaide Plains prescribed groundwater resources

Region	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Central Adelaide			
T1			
Kangaroo Flat			
T2			
Northern Adelaide			
T1			
T2			

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.
Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2013 to 2025 for Central Adelaide T1. Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025 for remainder of water resources.
Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1979-80 to 2025 at North Adelaide (#23011) weather station for Central Adelaide, at Gawler (#23078) weather station for Kangaroo Flat, and Smithfield (#23025) weather station for Northern Adelaide Plains.

¹⁵ Central Adelaide metered water use data is available from 2022-23. In 2022-23, 30% of licensed bores were metered; the number of metered bores is increasing each year.

Water security summary

The Adelaide Plains WAP became operational on 1 July 2022, replacing the former Northern Adelaide Plains WAP. It sets out how much groundwater can be taken from specific aquifers and outlines management principles. It is the first WAP for the Dry Creek and Central Adelaide PWAs.

The WAP includes an adaptive management approach that limits the volume of groundwater that can be extracted from the T1 and T2 aquifers of the Northern Adelaide Plains where the resource is at higher risk. This is achieved through the use of resource condition triggers that act as an early warning system that the resource condition limit is at risk of being breached and initiates a management response that reduces the risk of this occurring.

The Adelaide Plains WAP also includes rules for managing water that is drained or discharged into aquifers, known as managed aquifer recharge. The principles in the WAP enable further storage of water in the aquifers for future use, where it is sustainable, and therefore enhance the water security of the region.

Six of the 11 consumptive pools currently have unallocated entitlement shares available for potential consumptive use. DEW developed a water release strategy for the Adelaide Plains, which included setting a price for water. Water will be released in 2 stages. The first stage undertaken in 2025 released 50% of unallocated entitlement shares through an expression of interest (EOI) process in the following consumptive pools:

- T1 Regional
- T2 Regional
- Lower Tertiary (T3/T4)
- Golden Grove Embayment
- Noarlunga Embayment
- Northern Fractured Rock.

Water sales to date include water sold at a concessional rate where it is to be used for greening and cooling activities. The remaining water will be held back while First Nations' water interests are addressed.

In 2025, in response to a high level of interest in trading in the T1 and T2 Northern Adelaide Plains consumptive pools, DEW developed an [online tool](#) for water licence holders. This tool provided a preliminary check of whether a transfer application in the T1 and T2 Northern Adelaide Plains consumptive pools would likely meet Principles 50(b) and 50(c)(i) outlined in Section 7.9 of the Adelaide Plains WAP.

The water security of the region has also been strengthened by the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS), unlocking up to 6 GL of recycled wastewater sourced from the Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant (SA Water 2023). Recycled water from the Bolivar Wastewater Treatment Plant is a climate-resilient water source that has the potential to build resilience to drought. Through the Australian Government's National Water Grid Water Infrastructure for Sustainable and Efficient Regions (WISER) initiative, Australian Government funding has been secured to extend the NAIS recycled water pipeline to Mallala. Extension of the pipeline will enable up to 1.3 GL per year of recycled water to be used for agricultural production including high-tech greenhouse vegetable production.

The State Government's Urban Greening Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide was released in March 2025, with a long-term vision of a resilient and liveable Adelaide for all: leafier, cooler and more biodiverse. Green Adelaide is facilitating implementation of the Strategy across government which is expected to support improved water security through encouraging increased use of water-sensitive urban design, water smart greening choices under a changing climate and stormwater capture and reuse and recycled water use to ensure there is adequate water to support healthy and thriving green spaces.

Eyre Peninsula

The Eyre Peninsula region covers approximately 51,000 square kilometres of land supporting a population of nearly 58,000 people. The major towns are Whyalla, Port Lincoln and Ceduna. Average annual rainfall ranges from 250 mm in the north to 560 mm in the south.

There are several wetlands of national importance on Eyre Peninsula. Most are coastal, with some receiving groundwater discharge. Most of the inland wetlands are saline. There are only a couple of permanent fresh or brackish wetlands in southern Eyre Peninsula, most notably Little Swamp and Big Swamp. There are also groundwater dependent ecosystems associated with red gums and wetlands in southern Eyre Peninsula and the central west near Elliston.

Most of the region’s fresh groundwater is prescribed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* and take is regulated through the WAP for the Southern Basins and Musgrave Prescribed Wells Areas and associated water licences.

Southern Basins and Musgrave

Eyre Peninsula’s mains water supply needs are currently met by a mix of local groundwater and imported River Murray water. Further to these sources, there is a recognised need for a new climate-resilient water source in the region, to reduce the pressure on existing resources, while enabling future economic development in the region.

There are 2 prescribed wells areas on the Eyre Peninsula – Musgrave and Southern Basins. The fresh groundwater resources in both areas are used mainly for public water supply, stock and domestic use, irrigation of open spaces and industrial purposes. The location of the prescribed areas can be seen in Figure 26.

Water Use

Since 2020-21, annual groundwater use has been constant at about 0.06 GL from the Musgrave PWA and ranging from 5.3 GL to 6.2 GL from the Southern Basins PWA. Unlike other regions, water use patterns do not closely correlate to annual rainfall volumes due to most water extracted being used to meet potable water demand, as shown in Figure 27.



Figure 26. Prescribed areas in the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board area

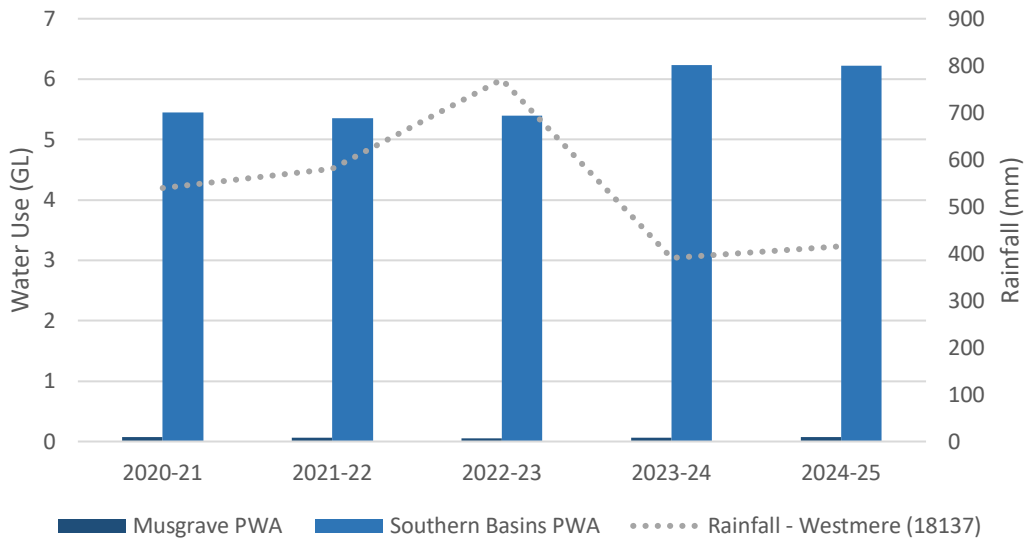


Figure 27. Eyre Peninsula annual rainfall and groundwater use

Water resource condition and trends

Aside from Polda, where the trends are stable, rainfall trends across the Eyre Peninsula region are declining while salinity trends are increasing, (Table 15). Groundwater levels status varies from lowest on record (Uley Wanilla) to average (Bramfield, Coffin Bay and Uley South).

Table 15. Condition of Eyre Peninsula prescribed groundwater resources

Musgrave	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Bramfield			
Polda			
Southern Basins	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
Coffin Bay			
Lincoln South			
Uley South			
Uley Wanilla			

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.
Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025.
Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1971 to 2025 at Elliston (#18069) weather station (for Bramfield), at Terrah Winds (#18165) weather station (for Polda), and at Westmere (#18137) weather station for Southern Basins (for Coffin Bay, Lincoln South, Uley South and Wanilla).

Water security summary

The groundwater resources of the Southern Basins and Musgrave Prescribed Wells Areas are vital in the provision of groundwater for licenced purposes such as public water supply and irrigation, as well as unlicensed stock and domestic use. As such, current groundwater levels and rainfall trends represent risks to primary producers, remote critical human water needs and all customers of SA Water (the majority of the population and businesses of the Eyre Peninsula).

In response to scientific advice that current levels of groundwater extraction are no longer sustainable, the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board (the Board) commenced a combined review and amendment of the Water Allocation Plan (the Plan) for the Southern Basins and Musgrave Prescribed Wells Areas in April 2024. The draft Plan went out for public consultation in October 2025, with a target approval date of late April.

The draft Plan proposes a reduction in SA Water's annual licensed extraction from 7.3 GL to 3.5 GL from the Uley South Consumptive Pool, with no water to be extracted from Lincoln South and the Uley Wanilla pools. A staged approach to these reductions is proposed with a maximum of 6.3 GL/y available in 2026-27 (Uley South only), reducing to 3.5 GL/y from Uley South from the 2027-28 water use year.

With groundwater from the Southern Basins currently providing around 75% of the total water supplied to SA Water's Eyre Peninsula customers, SA Water, the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, State Government and Local Government have been collaborating to ensure that water security for the Eyre Peninsula is maintained in the short, medium and long term:

- a new seawater desalination plant at Billy Lights Point is central to addressing the supply shortfall that will arise from the proposed reductions in groundwater allocations from the Southern Basins. This climate-independent water source is expected to come online by the end of 2026 and will supplement River Murray water delivered to the Eyre Peninsula by the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline via Kimba and Lock and the soon-to-be-reduced groundwater allocations to SA Water.
- to manage this period of transition to reduce groundwater reliance, SA Water has updated its [Eyre Peninsula Water Security Response Plan](#) to outline how the region's water supply will be maintained until the desalination plant is operational. The plan outlines a tiered approach to the sharing of water when resources are stressed and requires SA Water to take steps to ensure that water demand does not increase and places limits on new large industrial or commercial water connections.
- in November 2024, it was announced that the region was at water security 'Level 2- save water'. This means water resources meet current demand but there is limited opportunity to support growth.
- implementation of Level 2 of the Water Security Response Plan has enabled key projects that seek to support long-term substitution and/or reduction of drinking water demand on Eyre Peninsula, including:
 - extension of the Port Lincoln Recycled Water Scheme to additional schools and parks for greening
 - the [Eyre Peninsula Farm Water Security project that](#) encourages on-farm water conservation, given the primary industries sector uses 38% of the drinking water on Eyre Peninsula
 - rebates for water efficient appliances and household fixtures.

On the west coast of the Eyre Peninsula, the town of Elliston is home to approximately 350 people. The town's drinking water system is not connected to the network supplying other parts of the Eyre Peninsula. SA Water draws from the nearby Bramfield groundwater resource (part of the Musgrave Prescribed Wells Area) to supply drinking water to the town. Between 50-70 ML of groundwater is extracted by SA Water each year and it is estimated that up to 180 ML is extracted by landholders through private bores to support livestock enterprises and for domestic use in the surrounding region. This groundwater resource is also important for ecosystems such as Lake Newland and red gum trees.

Current scientific understanding indicates that there is sufficient supply available to meet the needs for local SA Water customers in Elliston for the short to medium-term but that there is an ongoing risk of seawater being drawn towards the fresh groundwater supply by future pumping. SA Water has been issued a 2025/26 allocation of 68.5 ML to supply Elliston's drinking water needs, which is expected to be sufficient. The draft Plan proposes a new approach to how water is allocated in the region, including new mechanisms for managing risks to groundwater decline and changes in salinity.

The District Council of Elliston and its Section 41 community committee continue to work with the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board, SA Water and DEW on investigations to understand the longevity of the resource and to identify and prioritise long-term water security options for Elliston. DEW has recently completed a project funded by the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund, to review current knowledge and carry out research on the Bramfield groundwater resource. The results of this project have been incorporated into the draft Plan.

SA Arid Lands

The SA Arid Lands region covers more than half of South Australia, taking up the state’s north-east corner to its borders with New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The region covers 525,000 square kilometres and has a population of around 26,000 people. Aside from the City of Port Augusta with a population of around 14,000 people, and the towns of Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy, the human population in this semi-arid region is small and geographically dispersed. Coober Pedy and Roxby Downs are both associated with mining and are home to fewer than 5,000 people, while the remaining scattered towns all have 1,500 occupants or less.

The region has irregular rainfall and other episodic weather events that rarely follow predictable annual cycles. The region includes some of the driest parts of South Australia and has the largest percentage of intact ecosystems and natural biodiversity in the state. These iconic terrestrial ecosystems – including sandy deserts, stony plains and the Gawler, Flinders and Olary ranges – are home to a range of unique plants and animals, many of which are only found within the region.

Far North

In the Far North the primary source of water is the confined groundwater from the Great Artesian Basin (GAB). Groundwater is the principal source of water for commercial, irrigation and industrial use, town water supply, stock and domestic use, bore-fed wetlands, and petroleum and mining production. The surface expression of groundwater, GAB Springs, supports traditional Aboriginal cultural value and rare native species that are, in some cases, endemic to a single GAB spring. The native flora and fauna dependent on the natural discharge of groundwater from the GAB are protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

The location of the Far North PWA is shown in Figure 28.

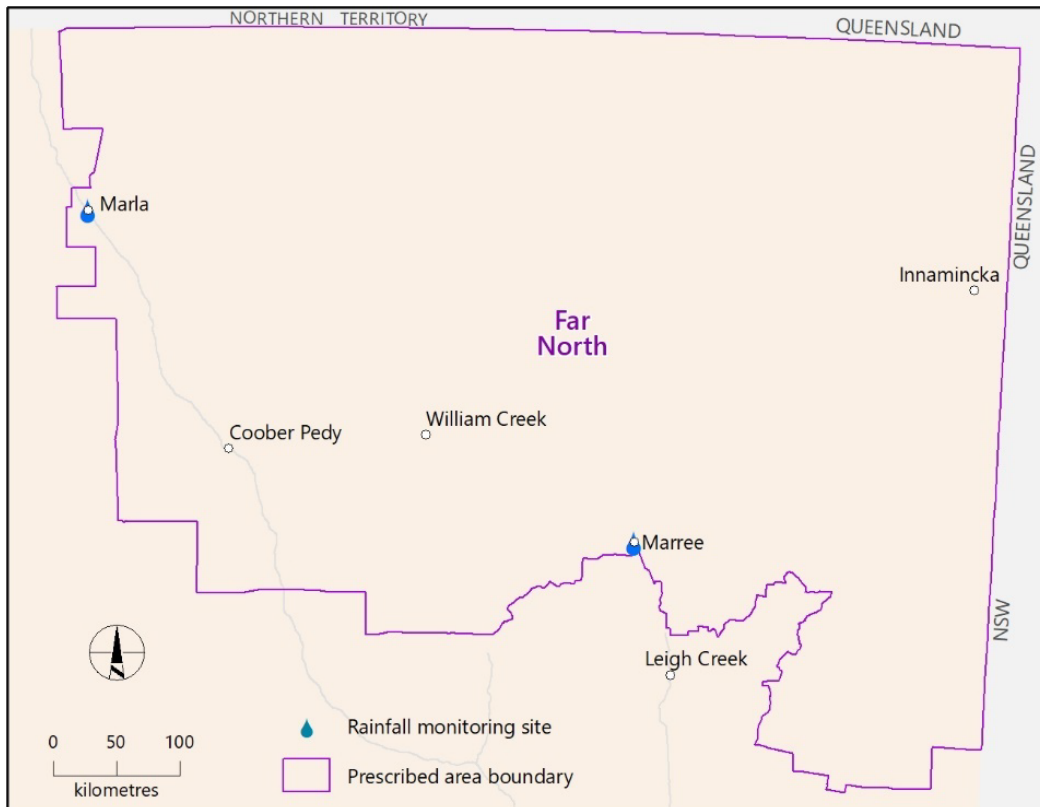


Figure 28. Prescribed areas in the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board area

Water Use

SA Water supplies water to around 16,000 customers across 19 diverse communities in the SA Arid Lands. Groundwater is a critical source for 13 communities, with others supplied with River Murray water. River Murray water is also an important water source for Port Augusta, Iron Knob and the old railway towns.




Comprehensive metered groundwater use data for the Far North Prescribed Wells Area (PWA) is not yet available. The annual volume of groundwater authorised for use in mining is approximately 27.4 GL. The petroleum industry is authorised to use approximately 24.6 GL (2.7 GL petroleum and 21.9 GL co-produced water). Stock use is estimated to equate to approximately 9.8 GL per year.

Groundwater use is measured by the mining and petroleum sectors; however, challenges exist to implement wide scale metering of pastoral bores. The SA Arid Lands Landscape Board and DEW are currently working with the pastoral industry to identify fit-for-purpose ‘water use accounting’ methods.

Water resource condition and trends

The groundwater level status in the GAB (J-K) aquifer is average; salinity level trends are stable; and the rainfall trend in is declining (Table 16).

Table 16. Condition of Far North prescribed groundwater resources

Far North	Groundwater level status	Salinity	Rainfall
GAB (J-K) aquifer			

Water level status = Groundwater level compared to the historical range of water levels in wells in the regional monitoring network.

Salinity = Trend in groundwater salinity over period 2014 to 2025.

Rainfall = Trend in average annual rainfall over period 1971 to 2025 at Marree (#17031) weather station.

Water security summary

An updated water allocation plan for the Far North PWA was adopted in February 2021. The provisions of the WAP aim to ensure that groundwater use does not have unacceptable impacts on the groundwater pressure or levels that would affect other users’ ability to access the groundwater or reduce natural discharges to sites of cultural or ecological significance.

As part of the *GAB Springs Monitoring Project*, the SA Arid Land Landscape Board, in collaboration with Traditional Owners, DEW and volunteer group Friends of the Mound Springs are developing a GAB Spring monitoring program to enable tracking and assessment of changes in spring condition.

Over the past 2 decades, the Australian Government, the Government of South Australia and landholders have invested approximately \$29 million to repair and restore uncontrolled wells and to close open drains across the GAB to improve artesian pressure. In South Australia, the Far North WAP further supports this investment by requiring groundwater taken for pastoral use to be through closed delivery systems.

Under a program to enable South Australian bore owners to apply for grants to complete capping and piping projects, up to \$5 million in Australian Government funding will be provided under the Great Artesian Basin Water Security Program (GABWSP).

The Northern Water Project is a water supply project to deliver a reliable, climate-resilient source of water to the Upper Spencer Gulf and Far North of the State, through the construction of a new desalination plant and water pipeline at Mullaquana Station, 20km south of Whyalla. The project will provide stable and reliable water, independent of climate variability, to support the growth of future industries. This will realise the full potential of our state’s copper province, where major mines are connected to a central smelter and refinery hub, and significantly boost Australia’s position as a key driver of global decarbonisation. Desalinated water will be delivered to commercial offtakers through an approximately 400 km pipeline, allowing industry to reduce its reliance on fragile water resources such as the Great Artesian Basin.

The Project has pre-committed funding from the South Australian Government, BHP and the Australian Government for the pre-delivery costs for the required activities to inform the Project’s Final Investment Decision (FID). Through the National Water Grid Fund the Australian Government is contributing \$65 million towards pre-FID costs via the Northern Water (preconstruction) Project.

Whole-of-government work on the project, and the opportunities it unlocks, has substantially stepped up over the last year. The next key steps for the Project are to:

- complete a procurement process via a Request for Proposal, to deliver detailed designs and market-tested pricing, enabling finalisation of offtake agreements and informing the State Government’s Financial Investment Decision (FID)
- progress the planning and environmental assessment including submission under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (SA) and referral under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth)
- secure foundational offtake agreements to support the Project’s commercial viability and unlock intergenerational economic opportunities across South Australia

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- continue extensive marine and terrestrial environmental studies
- progress Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys and Native Title negotiations
- continue engagement with landowners, stakeholders and the community to ensure risks and opportunities are adequately identified, understood and addressed.

The FID will serve as the major decision point for the South Australian Government on whether to proceed with the Project.

However, sourcing suitable quality groundwater in the SA Arid Lands for drinking water remains a challenge as demands increase and climate volatility impacts the reliability of locally recharged groundwater sources. In recent years SA Water has delivered desalination plants for a number of communities in the region (Marla, Maree, Oodnadatta and Hawker). Upcoming water supply infrastructure upgrades by SA Water in the region include the drilling, equipping and connection of replacement bores at Quorn, Melrose and Wilmington, and new bores at Parachilna, Oodnadatta, Saltia and Hammond-Willowie. SA Water also continues to progress investigations to deliver affordable, sustainable and fit-for-purpose water supplies in other communities in the region.

Similar challenges also exist for communities responsible for their own water supply (i.e. not serviced by SA Water or other water utility). In 2025, the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund and the Government of South Australia committed to jointly fund the \$4.12 Securing critical water needs for self-supplied remote First Nations communities project. This project will deliver water supply, quality and access solutions. These have been agreed to with the Aboriginal homelands of:

- Iga Warta
- Leigh Creek Station
- Kakalpurannah
- Yappala.

The project will draw on the findings of a National Water Grid science project on groundwater quality completed in 2025, while the works planned for Iga Warta will build on the success of an earlier National Water Grid project, completed in 2024.

Non-prescribed resources

There are extensive areas of South Australia where comprehensive management through a Water Allocation Plan and a water licensing system is not required because there is not sufficient demand for water or there is a low risk to the water resources. For these non-prescribed areas, water affecting activities are managed through permits to protect the integrity of the water resources and to minimise the impact of the activities.

Kangaroo Island, the Alinytjara Wilurara region (north-west third of South Australia) and Yorke Peninsula are examples of locations where a permit system is used to protect the integrity of the water resources and to minimise the impact of water affecting activities.

Kangaroo Island

Kangaroo Island is Australia’s third largest island, covering approximately 4,440 square kilometres and supporting a population of nearly 5,000 people. The main industries are agriculture, tourism and retail, health and community services.

Average annual rainfall on Kangaroo Island ranges from 900 mm in the west to 400 mm in the east. The island relies heavily on surface water captured in farm dams to supply water for stock and domestic needs. Most surface water flows are intermittent over winter. There is limited good quality groundwater available on the island.

The island has several main watercourses, including Cygnet River, Middle River, Rocky River, Breakneck River, Chapman River, Wilson River, Harriet River, Eleanor River and Stun’sail Boom River. Most of these watercourses are ephemeral and begin in the central part of the island before flowing out to sea. There are 15 wetlands of national importance on Kangaroo Island, and many inland salt lakes (Figure 29).

Kangaroo Island is experiencing a shift in water resource use, with a gradual reduction in water demand associated with commercial forestry as plantations are removed, alongside an increased interest in irrigated agricultural activity (mainly seed potatoes). This changing demand profile, combined with a drying climate, has reinforced the need for adaptive water management.

Farm dams remain the primary method of collecting and supplying water for stock and domestic needs due to the limited availability of good quality groundwater and limited access to mains water on the island.

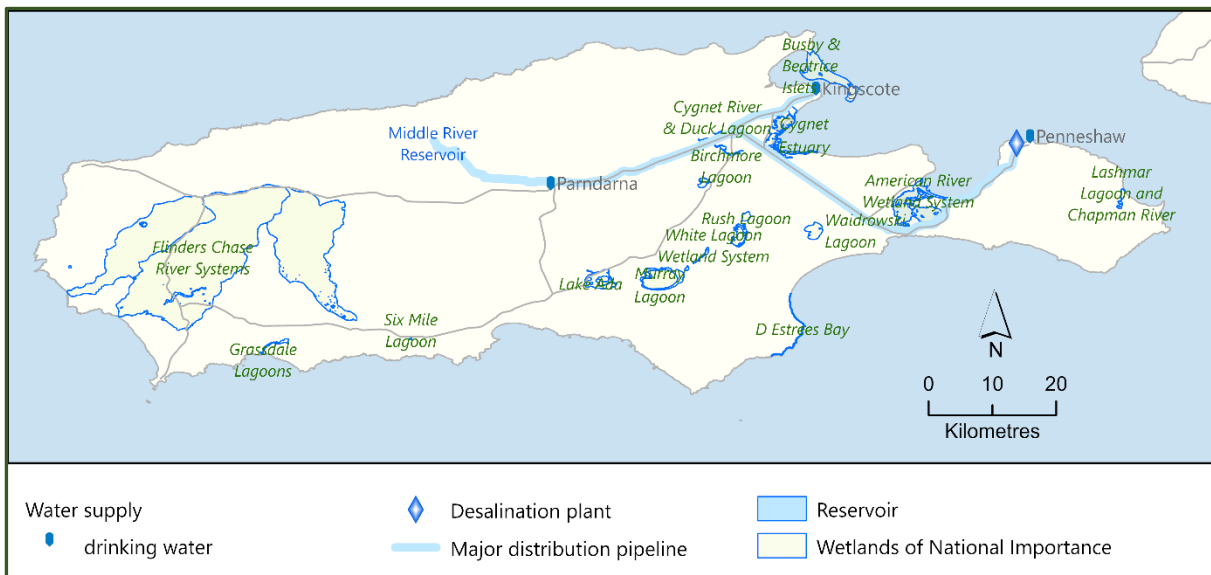


Figure 29. Kangaroo Island water supply and wetlands of national importance

Together, the Middle River Water Supply System and the 2 Penneshaw Desalination Plants supply drinking water to approximately half of Kangaroo Island’s population. In areas outside of the reticulated water networks, rainwater is the main source for household drinking supplies. The new desalination plant which was turned on in December 2024 enabled households and businesses in populated areas such as American River and Island Beach to connect to the SA water network.

There are no prescribed areas for water management on Kangaroo Island and therefore no water allocation plans. The Kangaroo Island Landscape Board manages dam construction and other water affecting activities that affect sustainable water use and water quality under the Kangaroo Island Water Affecting Activity Control Policy (2020). This policy is currently under review with an expected completion and adoption date in early 2027.

Alinytjara Wilurara

The Alinytjara Wilurara region covers over 250,000 square kilometres, stretching from the Northern Territory and West Australian borders and south to the Great Australian Bight Marine Park. The primary land tenure is formally recognised Aboriginal Lands and Government Reserves.

There are no permanent rivers or creeks in the region and the recharge of groundwater, rock holes, springs and soaks is dependent on infrequent heavy rainfalls. Rock holes and soaks have significance to Aboriginal People as ceremonial, social and trading locations and are central to the health of remote Aboriginal communities.

Groundwater remains the predominant water source for remote Aboriginal communities. Water at 13 major communities is provided by SA Water. Projects are underway to improve the quality and reliability of supply to communities in the region. Recent and current SA Water remote communities initiatives include:

- equipping and connecting new bores established at Indulkana (Iwantja) in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands (jointly funded by the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund, and the Government of South Australia).
- smart metering upgrades across groundwater supplied networks and wastewater system upgrades to Amata, Pukatja and Mimili in the APY Lands.

In 2025, the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund, and the Government of South Australia committed to jointly fund just over \$10 million for the *APY Lands Water Supply Revitalisation project*. This project will improve water security in 8 Aboriginal communities in the South Australian APY Lands. The project supports progress towards long-term water security in the APY Lands and complements a National Water Grid science project looking into groundwater in the area (see below).

The potential for aquifers in the APY Lands to support future community and agricultural initiatives is being assessed through the *APY Lands Groundwater Quantity and Quality Investigation project*. This project is funded by the Australian Government, through the National Water Grid Fund. The project will consider water priorities of the Anangu and the potential for aquifers within the region to achieve community aspirations. Community members will establish priorities for sustainable uses of potential new groundwater resources. Information gathered during the research project is expected to assist in future water infrastructure investment decisions.

Yorke Peninsula

On the Yorke Peninsula, rural land is largely used for dryland cereal cropping and sheep and cattle grazing. Salt production, mining, fishing and tourism are also important industries for the region.

Surface water supplies are limited, and almost all groundwater shows high salinity and is not suitable as a supply of drinking water. While drinking water is supplied to many townships in the region from the River Murray via the Morgan-Whyalla and Swan Reach-Paskeville pipelines (see Figure 2), a number of coastal landowners rely on rainwater for drinking water supplies. A desalination plant at Marion Bay also supplies water to Marion Bay residents, businesses and visitors to the area.

Water affecting activities are managed via the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board's Water-Affecting Activities Control Policy (Northern and Yorke Landscape Board 2020).

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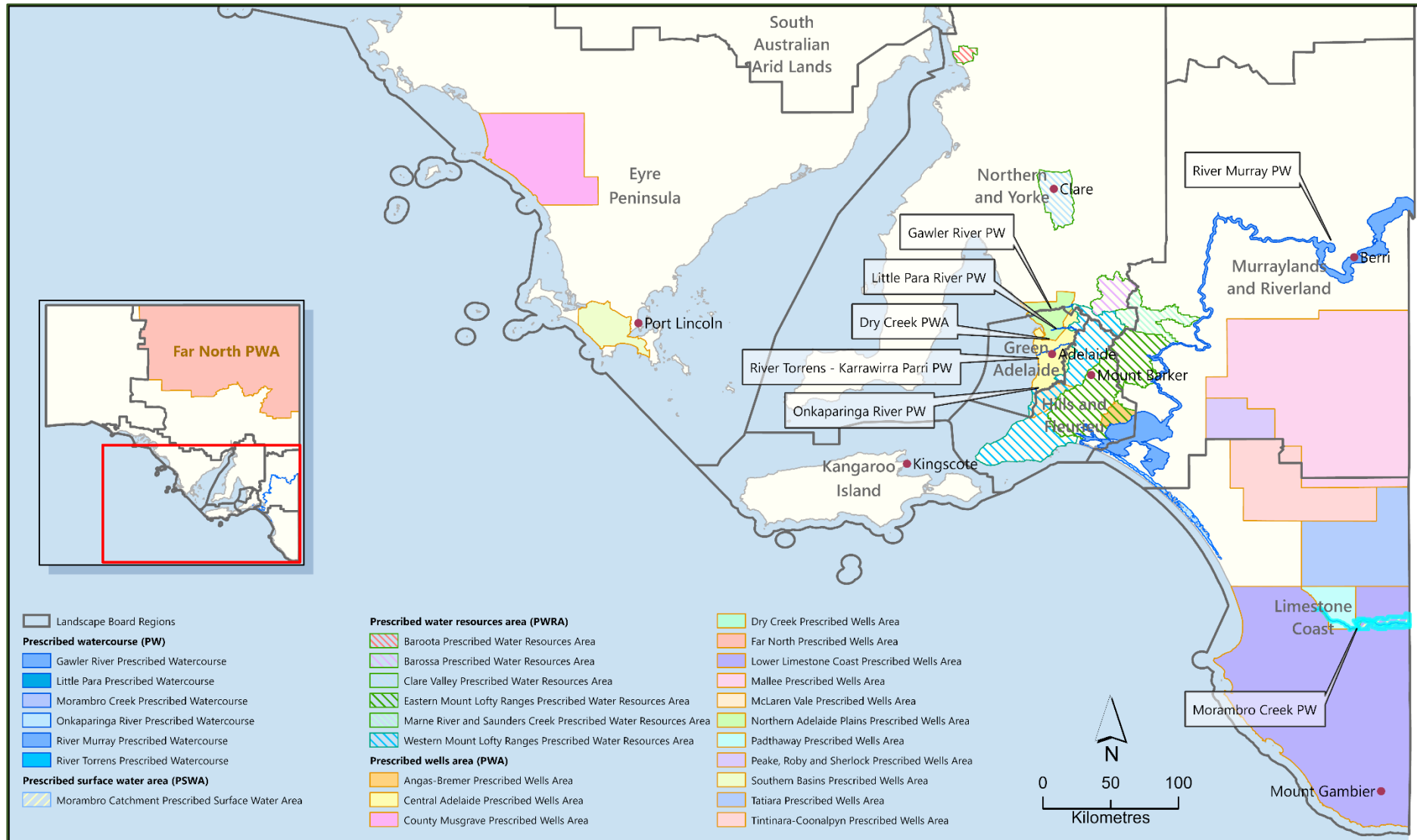
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Acronyms and terms

Acronyms and terms	Definition
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
DEW	Department for Environment and Water
ESCOSA	Essential Services Commission of South Australia
GL	Gigalitre (1,000,000,000 litres)
ML	Megalitre (1,000,000 litres)
PIRSA	Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia
PWA	Prescribed wells area
SA	South Australia
WAP	Water allocation plan

Appendix A: Prescribed areas



Appendix B: Water allocation plan status

Water allocation plan	Prescribed Area	Landscape region (Lead region in bold)	Approval date of current WAP	Status at 26/2/2026
Adelaide Plains Water Allocation Plan	Central Adelaide Prescribed Wells Area and Dry Creek Prescribed Wells Area Northern Adelaide Plains Prescribed Wells Area	Green Adelaide Hills and Fleurieu Northern and Yorke	16/02/2022	Review due by 2032
Morambro Creek Water Allocation Plan	Morambro Creek and Nyroca Channel Prescribed Watercourse Morambro Creek Prescribed Surface water Area	Limestone Coast	13/01/2006	Review due 2026
Tatiara Water Allocation Plan	Tatiara Prescribed Wells Area	Limestone Coast	7/06/2010	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area	Barossa Prescribed Water Resources Area	Northern and Yorke	18/06/2009	Targeting adoption mid 2026
Water Allocation Plan Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges	Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges Prescribed Water Resources Area. Angas Bremer Prescribed Wells Area.	Hills and Fleurieu Murraylands and Riverland Northern and Yorke	17/12/2013	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan for the Baroota Prescribed Water Resources Area	Baroota Prescribed Water Resources Area	Northern and Yorke		New WAP under development
Water Allocation Plan for the Clare Valley Prescribed Water Resources Area	Clare Valley Prescribed Water Resources Area	Northern and Yorke	4/05/2009	Review due by 2029
Water Allocation Plan for the Far North Prescribed Wells Area	Far North Prescribed Wells Area	South Australian Arid Lands	28/02/2021	Review due by 2031
Water Allocation Plan for the Lower Limestone Coast Prescribed Wells Area	Lower Limestone Coast Prescribed Wells Area	Limestone Coast	26/11/2013	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan for the Mallee Prescribed Wells Area	Mallee Prescribed Wells Area	Murraylands and Riverland Limestone Coast	2/05/2012	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan for the Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resources Area	Marne Saunders Prescribed Water Resources Area	Murraylands and Riverland Northern and Yorke	13/2/2019	Review underway

Water allocation plan	Prescribed Area	Landscape region (Lead region in bold)	Approval date of current WAP	Status at 26/2/2026
Water Allocation Plan for the Padthaway Prescribed Wells Area	Padthaway Prescribed Wells Area	Limestone Coast	20/05/2025	Review due by 2035
Water Allocation Plan for the Peake Roby and Sherlock Prescribed Wells Area	Peake Roby and Sherlock Prescribed Wells Area	Murraylands and Riverland	2/03/2011	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse	River Murray Prescribed Watercourse	Murraylands and Riverland	27/04/2023	Review due by 2032
Water Allocation Plan for the Southern Basins and Musgrave Prescribed Wells Areas	Musgrave Prescribed Wells Area Southern Basins Prescribed Wells Area	Eyre Peninsula	28/06/2016	Targeting approval late April 2026
Water Allocation Plan for the Tintinara–Coonalpyn Prescribed Wells Area	Tintinara–Coonalpyn Prescribed Wells Area	Limestone Coast Murraylands and Riverland	23/04/2012	Review underway
Water Allocation Plan McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area	McLaren Vale Prescribed Wells Area	Hills and Fleurieu Green Adelaide	6/11/2007	Amendment underway
Water Allocation Plan Western Mount Lofty Ranges	Gawler River Prescribed Watercourse Little Para Prescribed Watercourse Onkaparinga Prescribed Watercourse River Torrens/Karrawirra Parri Prescribed Watercourse Western Mount Lofty Ranges Prescribed Water Resources Area	Hills and Fleurieu Green Adelaide Northern and Yorke	17/09/2013	Amendment underway

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