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# South Australian–Victorian Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee

## Fortieth Annual Report to 30 June 2025

### PREFACE

The Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee's Annual Report for 2024-25 fulfils the requirement under clause 30(1) of the Border Groundwaters Agreement to report on its activities during the year to 30 June 2025. This report has been compiled with reference to reports from South Australia and Victoria.

Clause 30(2) requires the Review Committee to forward a copy of the report to the appropriate Minister in each government.

Section 11 of the Victorian *Groundwater (Border Agreement) Act 1985* and section 13 of the South Australian *Groundwater (Border Agreement) Act 1985* provides that the relevant minister shall cause a copy of the annual report to be laid before the parliament within fourteen sitting days of the receipt of the report.

### 1. The year in summary

During the year, the Review Committee continued its oversight of groundwater use and trends in the Designated Area, with the objective of maintaining the ongoing sustainable and equitable use of groundwater along the South Australian-Victorian border.

The groundwater shares remain unchanged during the year and the resource is generally performing well to the level of use and groundwater levels. Use is similar to previous year and groundwaters trends are generally stable, however ongoing declines are noted in Zones 5A, 6A, 5B and 6B and in the north of Zone 1A (see representative hydrographs on p12). None of these trends exceed the permissible potentiometric surface lowering rate for the respective zones (Table 6).

Groundwater extractions were within the Permissible Annual Volumes for all zones in the year ending 30 June 2025. However, in Sub-zone 1A South, the Allowable Annual Volume of 15,000 ML was exceeded by 1,450 ML. The increased extraction in 2024-2025 can be attributed to the purchase of unused water allocation in 2023-24 and the subsequent extraction of this water (within allocation). The allocation exceeds the AAV in this Sub-zone and exceedance of the AAV is likely in future years.

The Review Committee has continued to work with South Australia to understand the risks to the resource from groundwater extraction in Sub-zone 1A South, supported by the technical work underway in this area (groundwater numerical modelling and monitoring of salinity along the coast). The coastal monitoring program has not reported any significant increase in salinity.

Of most concern to South Australia in Sub-zone 1A South and Zone 1A are the impacts on Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems from lower groundwater levels in dry years from local

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groundwater extractions and not primarily salinity impacts. South Australia is revising the Lower Limestone Coast Water Allocation Plan and recognise protection of Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems as a key local management issue.

The Review Committee is examining how to best address the risks in Sub-zone 1A South and is considering management options.

Both signatory states have complied with their reporting obligations under the Agreement, including the provision of their state annual reports in accordance with clause 27(1), and the Review Committee has considered the reports.

The Review Committee is working with the states on an Amended Agreement based on changes agreed and outlined to the respective state's Ministers.

## **40 Years Managing Shared Groundwater**

This marks 40 years since the Border Groundwaters Agreement was signed into legislation in both states. The Border Groundwaters Agreement has achieved strong, cooperative, and transparent management of shared groundwater between South Australia and Victoria. While the Agreement has been successful to date, there are future risks from climate and increased use, and the Review Committee is considering the need for better management arrangements and tools through amendment of the Agreement. The Review Committee is working to improve management by setting resource condition limits and actions to manage use.

## **2. About the Agreement and the Review Committee**

### **The South Australian–Victorian Border Groundwaters Agreement**

The Border Groundwaters Agreement (the Agreement) was established to protect the groundwater resources adjacent to the border between South Australia and Victoria and to provide for the cooperative management and equitable sharing of those resources and to guard against their undue depletion or degradation. The Designated Area established by the Agreement is a 40-kilometre-wide strip centred on the border and extending for its full length. The Designated Area is divided into 22 zones, 11 in each state (Figure 1).

The Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee (the Review Committee) with membership from both states is established under the Agreement as the operating body for the effective implementation and administration of the Agreement.<sup>1</sup>

The Review Committee is required, at intervals of not more than five years, to review the management prescriptions in the Designated Area. and to provide recommendations for amendments to the Ministers. Clause 22 provides for the Committee to “review the Agreement and, if in its opinion amendments thereto are necessary or desirable, make recommendations to the Contracting Governments accordingly”.

The members of the Review Committee comprised:

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<sup>1</sup> The Review Committee does not manage or control any public finances or assets.

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South Australia		Victoria	
Mr D Jordan	Member	Ms B Ashworth	Member
Ms E Perkins	Deputy member	Mr R Nott	Member
		Mr M Hudson	Deputy member

### 3. Prescriptions

None of the prescriptions were reviewed or changed during the year.-The next reviews of the management prescriptions are due as follows:

- Province 3 – March 2026
- Province 2 – December 2027
- Province 1 – Dec 2028

### Permissible Annual Volumes and Allowable Annual Volumes, allocations and use

The Permissible Annual Volumes for all zones and Allowable Annual Volumes for all sub-zones remained unchanged for the year ending 30 June 2025 and are shown in Table 1 (Tertiary Limestone Aquifer PAV), Table 2 (Tertiary Limestone Aquifer AAV) Table 3 (Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer PAV) and Table 4 (Pliocene Sands Aquifer PAV), along with allocations and use.

In Victoria the allocations do not exceed the Permissible Annual Volumes. In South Australia, allocations from the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer exceed the Permissible Annual Volumes for the majority of the zones. <sup>2</sup>

Extractions did not exceed the Permissible Annual Volumes for any zone for the year ending 30 June 2025. A history of total use in the Designated area from the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer since 2006 is shown in Figure 2.

Groundwater extraction from the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer in Sub-zone 1A South exceeded the Annual Allowable Volume by 1,450 ML during the year.

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<sup>2</sup> In Victoria, the PAV is taken as the limit of entitlement and the limit of extraction. In South Australia the PAV is the limit of extraction, with entitlement allowed to exceed the PAV. This divergence can be traced to 2013 when South Australia implemented the conversion of all area-based irrigation allocations to volumetric allocations and, while not granting any new allocations, it resulted in allocations exceeding the Permissible Annual Volumes in eight zones and the Allowable Annual Volume in two sub-zones. Agreement to the conversion was given on the assurance that extraction within the AAVs and PAVs would not be exceeded.

**Table 1. Permissible Annual Volumes, number of licences, allocations and annual volumes extracted for the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer at 30 June 2025**

South Australia					Victoria				
Tertiary Limestone Aquifer				Zone	Zone	Tertiary Limestone Aquifer			
Permissible Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations					Permissible Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations		
	Licences <sup>3</sup>	Volume Allocated <sup>4</sup> (ML)	Volume Extracted <sup>5</sup> (ML)	No. of Licences	Volume Allocated (ML)		Volume Extracted (ML)		
3,700	9	3,700	2,650	<b>11A</b>	<b>11B</b>	1,823	2	1,600	1,605 <sup>6</sup>
14,000	38	14,000	11,051	<b>10A</b>	<b>10B</b>	6,720	24	6,718	4,560
11,595	7	10,160	9,245	<b>9A</b>	<b>9B</b>	5,960	3	5,300	1,745
5,121	24	6,542	1,999	<b>8A</b>	<b>8B</b>	3,500	7	3,130	594
8,259	66	9,062	4,431	<b>7A</b>	<b>7B</b>	5,782	13	5,782	4,570
8,758	40	10,629	6,248	<b>6A</b>	<b>6B<sup>7</sup></b>	10,279	15	10,279	5,250
18,943	119	23,695	12,736	<b>5A</b>	<b>5B<sup>8</sup></b>	12,833	35	12,833	9,115
22,102	170	31,837	14,240	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	14,000	11	2,803	223
24,054	236	35,876	14,003	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	16,500	3	515	89.5
25,000	82	26,914	15,484	<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>	25,000	38	24,979	9,521
31,812	273	46,520	31,354	<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>	45,720	20	4,457	3,486
<b>173,344</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>218,935</b>	<b>123,441</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>148,117</b>	<b>169</b>	78,396	40,759

<sup>3</sup> The variability in the number of licences between reporting years is due to licensed allocation consolidation or division from the transfer of entitlements or business entity restructuring. The changes in the number of licences does not reflect an increase in the volume of water allocated, as the water allocation plans preclude the allocation of additional water.

<sup>4</sup> The licensed allocations in South Australia include a vineyard frost mitigation groundwater use allowance as an average annual value of 1.55ML/ha. The granted allocation is a rolling average over three years of 4.65 ML.

<sup>5</sup> South Australia allocation data excludes the delivery supplements for flood irrigation. The groundwater extraction volume is the amount taken from the bores.

<sup>6</sup> Carryover volume utilised – The Carryover Declaration for Murrayville Groundwater Management Area 2017 permits licensees to access the volume of groundwater not taken in the prior water season, up to 30% of licensed volume. There was no exceedance of the PAV.

<sup>7</sup> In Zones 5B and 6B, Neuarpur licensees were restricted to 80% of licence entitlement volume which equated to 10,826 ML available for Zone 5B and 8,263ML for Zone 6B.

<sup>8</sup> See explanation for preceding footnote.

**Table 2. Allowable Annual Volumes, number of licences, allocations and annual volumes extracted for the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer at 30 June 2025**

South Australia				
Tertiary Limestone Aquifer				Sub-Zone
Allowable Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations			
	Licences	Volume Allocated (ML)	Volume Extracted (ML) <sup>9</sup>	
2,400	2	2,400	1,704	<b>9A North</b>
7,760	5	7,760	7,541	<b>9A South</b>
4,658	19	5,320	3,864	<b>6A South</b>
15,000	47	21,225	16,450	<b>1A South</b>

**Table 3. Permissible Annual Volumes, allocations and annual volumes extracted for the Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer at 30 June 2025**

South Australia					Victoria				
Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer				Zone	Zone	Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer			
Permissible Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations					Permissible Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations		
	No. of Licences	Volume Allocated (ML)	Volume Extracted (ML)				No. of Licences	Volume Allocated (ML)	Volume Extracted (ML)
0	0	0	0	<b>11A</b>	<b>11B</b>	0	0	0	0
320	0	0	0	<b>10A</b>	<b>10B</b>	560	0	0	0
570	0	0	0	<b>9A</b>	<b>9B</b>	630	0	0	0
340	0	0	0	<b>8A</b>	<b>8B</b>	330	0	0	0
350	0	0	0	<b>7A</b>	<b>7B</b>	350	0	0	0
360	0	0	0	<b>6A</b>	<b>6B</b>	360	0	0	0
540	0	0	0	<b>5A</b>	<b>5B</b>	570	0	0	0
710	1	102	102	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	300	0	0	0
1,900	2	259	173	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	1,000	0	0	0
2,900	2	150	38	<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>	5,100	0	0	0
9,200	4	1,704	675	<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>	14,500	0	0	0

<sup>9</sup> Note for 9A South. All licensees extracted within their allocations. Extraction includes the use of carry-over volumes of unused allocation banked in the preceding water use year, as provided for in the Tatiara Water Allocation Plan in South Australia.

**Table 4. Permissible Annual Volume, number of licences, volume allocated and annual volume extracted for the Pliocene Sands Aquifer at 30 June 2025**

South Australia				
Pliocene Sands Aquifer				
Permissible Annual Volume (ML/y)	Licensed Allocations <sup>10</sup>			Zone
	No. of Licences	Volume Allocated (ML)	Volume Extracted (ML)	
7,763	0	0	4,251	<b>11A</b>

The permissible distance is the distance from the South Australia–Victoria border within which all applications for a permit or licence must be forwarded to the Review Committee for approval (Table 5). No changes were made to the permissible distances in the year ending 30 June 2025.

An application for a new bore permit under an existing water licence was referred to the Review Committee in January 2025 and approved by the Review Committee in May 2025.

**Table 5. Permissible distances at 30 June 2025**

South Australia			Victoria		
Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer Distance (km)	Tertiary Limestone Aquifer Distance (km)	Zone	Zone	Tertiary Limestone Aquifer Distance (km)	Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer Distance (km)
3	3	<b>11A</b>	<b>11B</b>	3	3
3	3	<b>10A</b>	<b>10B</b>	3	3
3	1	<b>9A</b>	<b>9B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>8A</b>	<b>8B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>7A</b>	<b>7B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>6A</b>	<b>6B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>5A</b>	<b>5B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>	1	3
3	1	<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>	1	3

<sup>10</sup> No licences currently exist in relation to the Pliocene sands aquifer in zone 11A. The take of water in the region which was previously managed through a single water licence to the then Minister for Water and River Murray, is now managed through the use of permits issued under the local water affecting activity control policy. Water use for the Noora salt interception scheme is still metered and therefore is able to be reported on in the absence of a licence.

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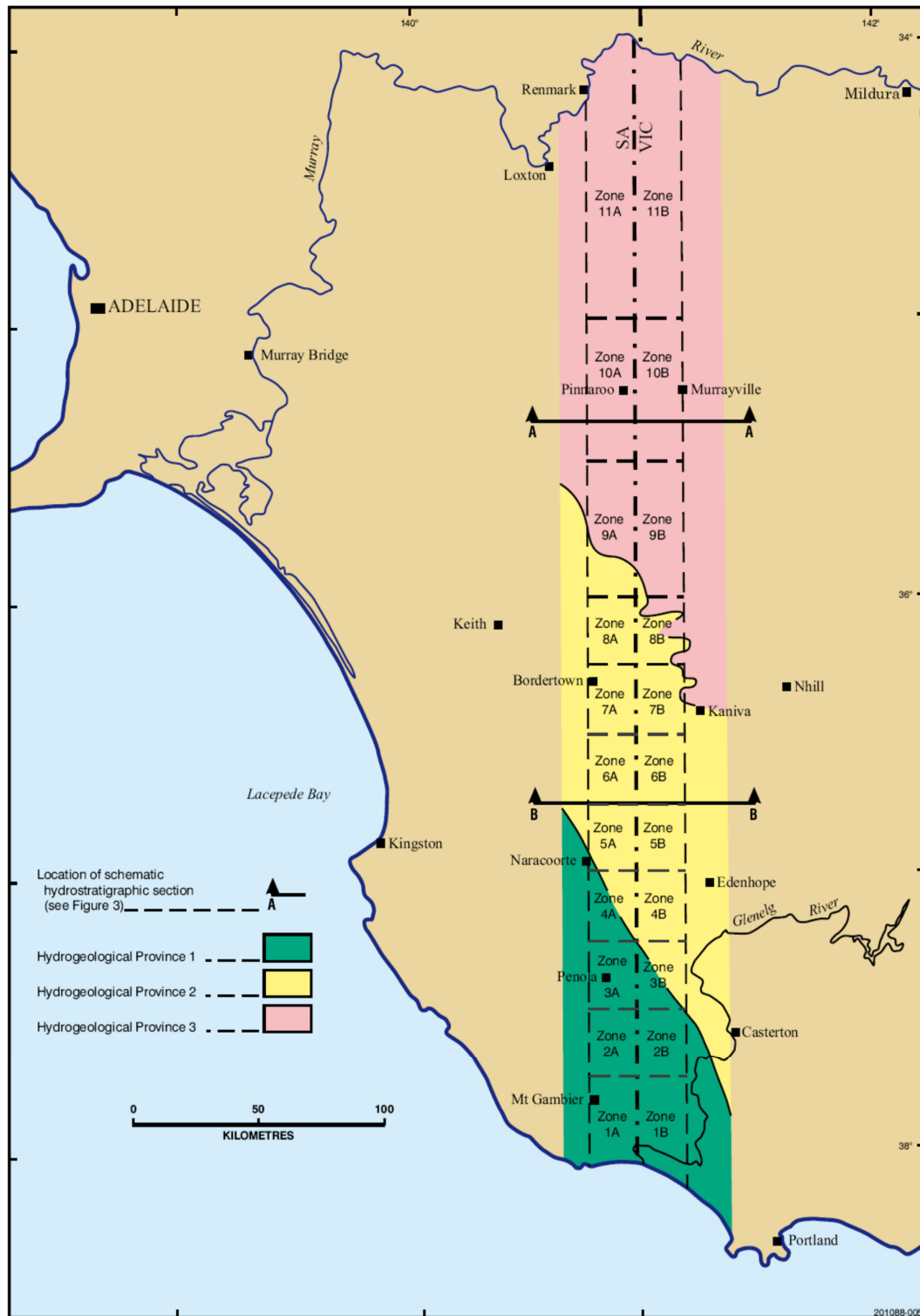
### Permissible potentiometric surface lowering

The permissible potentiometric surface lowering (or drawdown) that must not be exceeded are detailed in Table 6. Groundwater levels over the year are at similar to levels in the previous year (Figure 3 and 4). There were no exceedances of prescriptions in the year ending 30 June 2025.

**Table 6. Permissible potentiometric surface lowering at 30 June 2025**

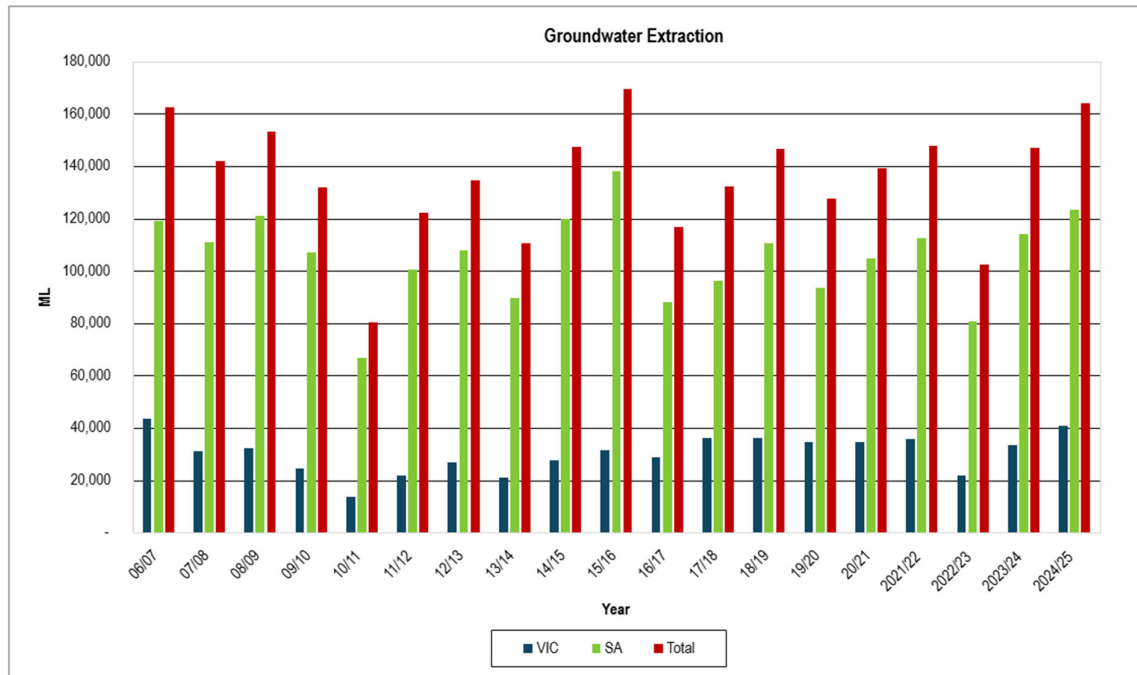
South Australia		Victoria	
Rate (m/y)	Zone	Zone	Rate (m/y)
0.65	<b>11A</b>	<b>11B</b>	0.65
0.65	<b>10A</b>	<b>10B</b>	0.65
0.65	<b>9A</b>	<b>9B</b>	0.65
0.05	<b>8A</b>	<b>8B</b>	0.65
0.05	<b>7A</b>	<b>7B</b>	0.05
0.05	<b>Sub-zone 6A North</b>	<b>6B</b>	0.20
0.20	<b>Sub-zone 6A South</b>		
0.20	<b>5A</b>	<b>5B</b>	0.20
0.25	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	0.25
0.25	<b>3A</b>	<b>3B</b>	0.25
0.25	<b>2A</b>	<b>2B</b>	0.25
0.25	<b>1A</b>	<b>1B</b>	0.25

**Figure 1. Designated Area and zones, showing Hydrogeological provinces**



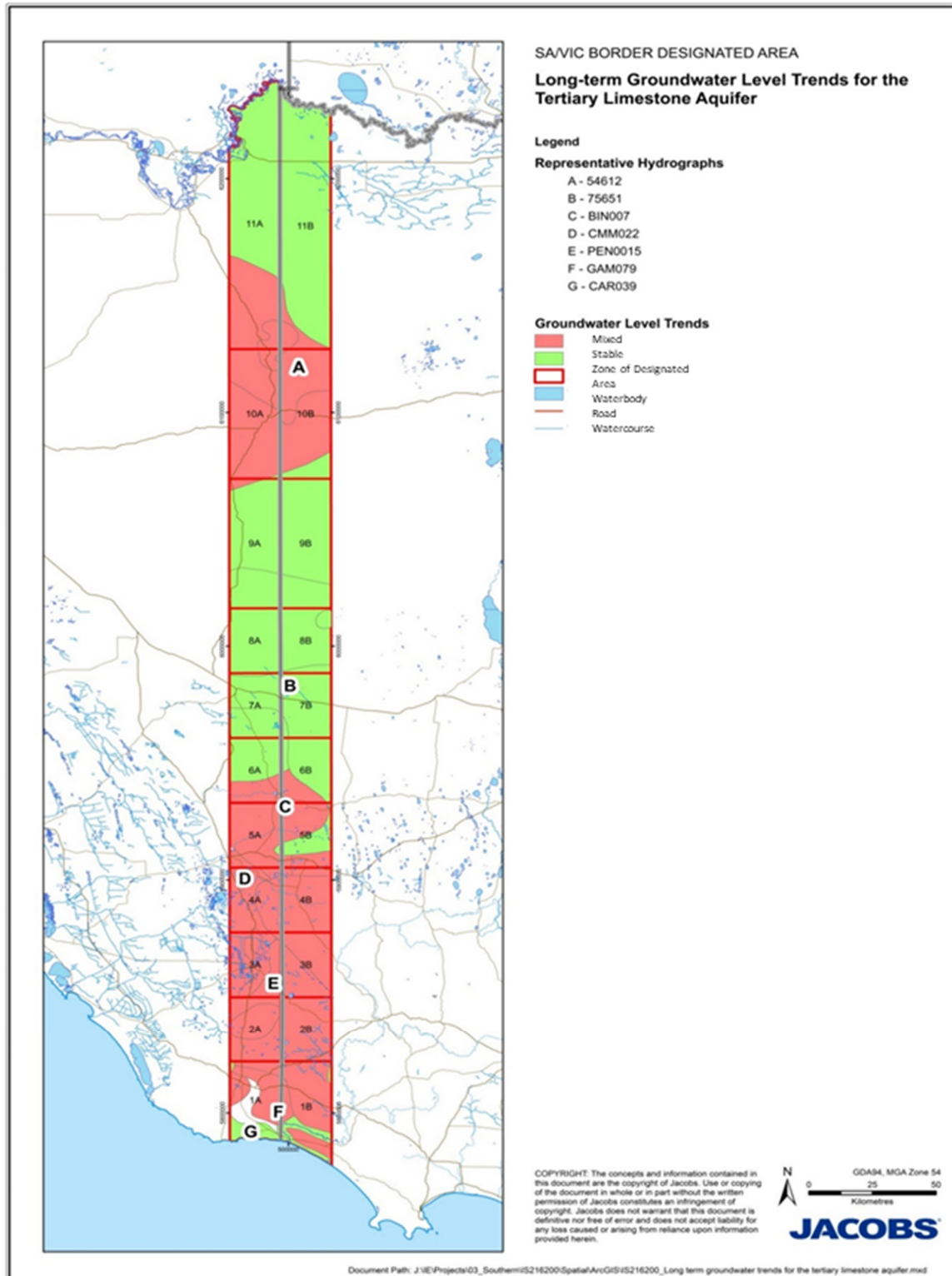
Note: 2006-07 was the first year that comprehensive metered groundwater extraction records were obtained.

**Figure 2. Annual volume extracted from the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer since 2006–07**

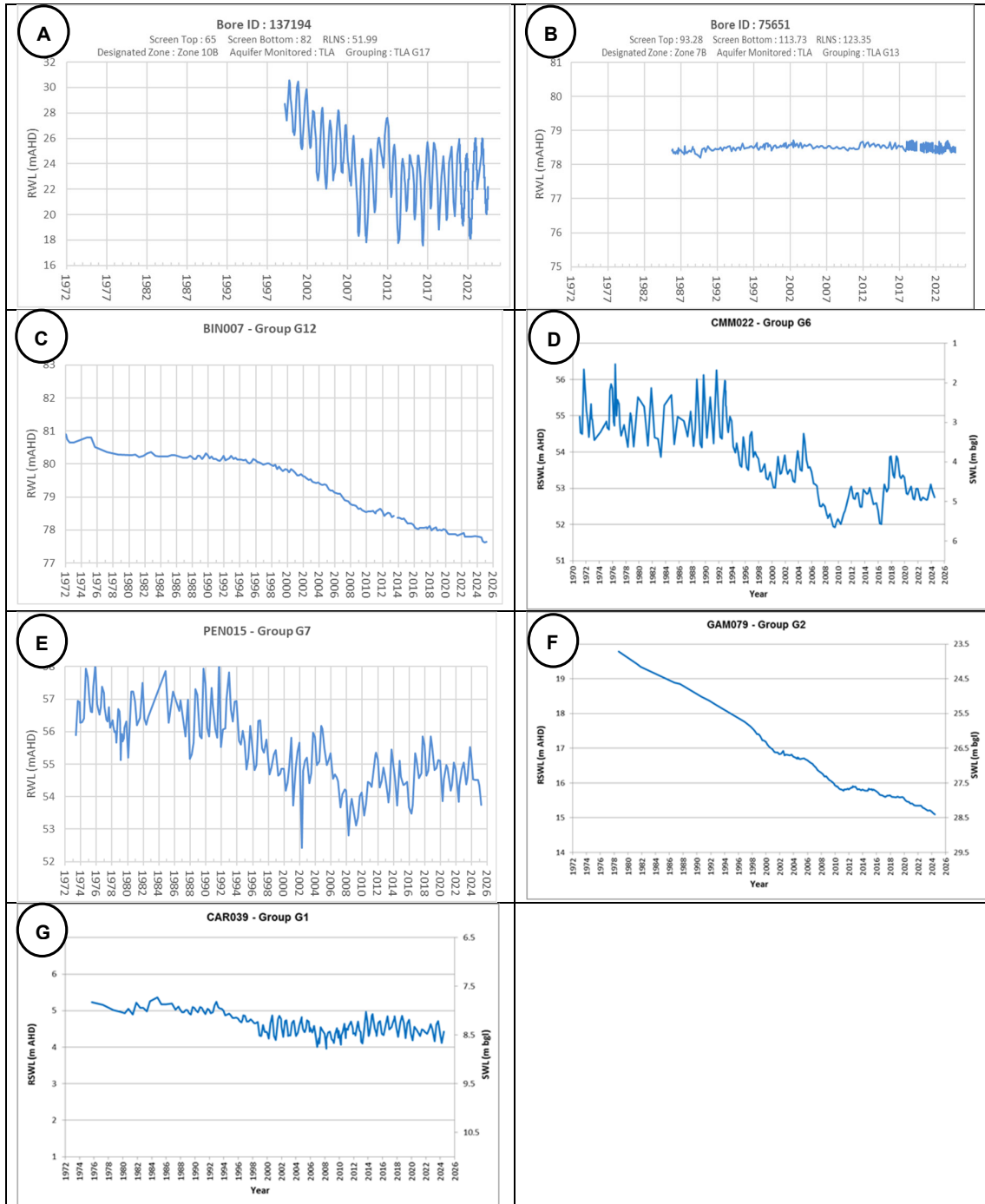


Note: 2006-07 was the first year that comprehensive metered groundwater extraction records were obtained.

**Figure 3. Groundwater level trends for the Tertiary Limestone Aquifer with some representative hydrographs**

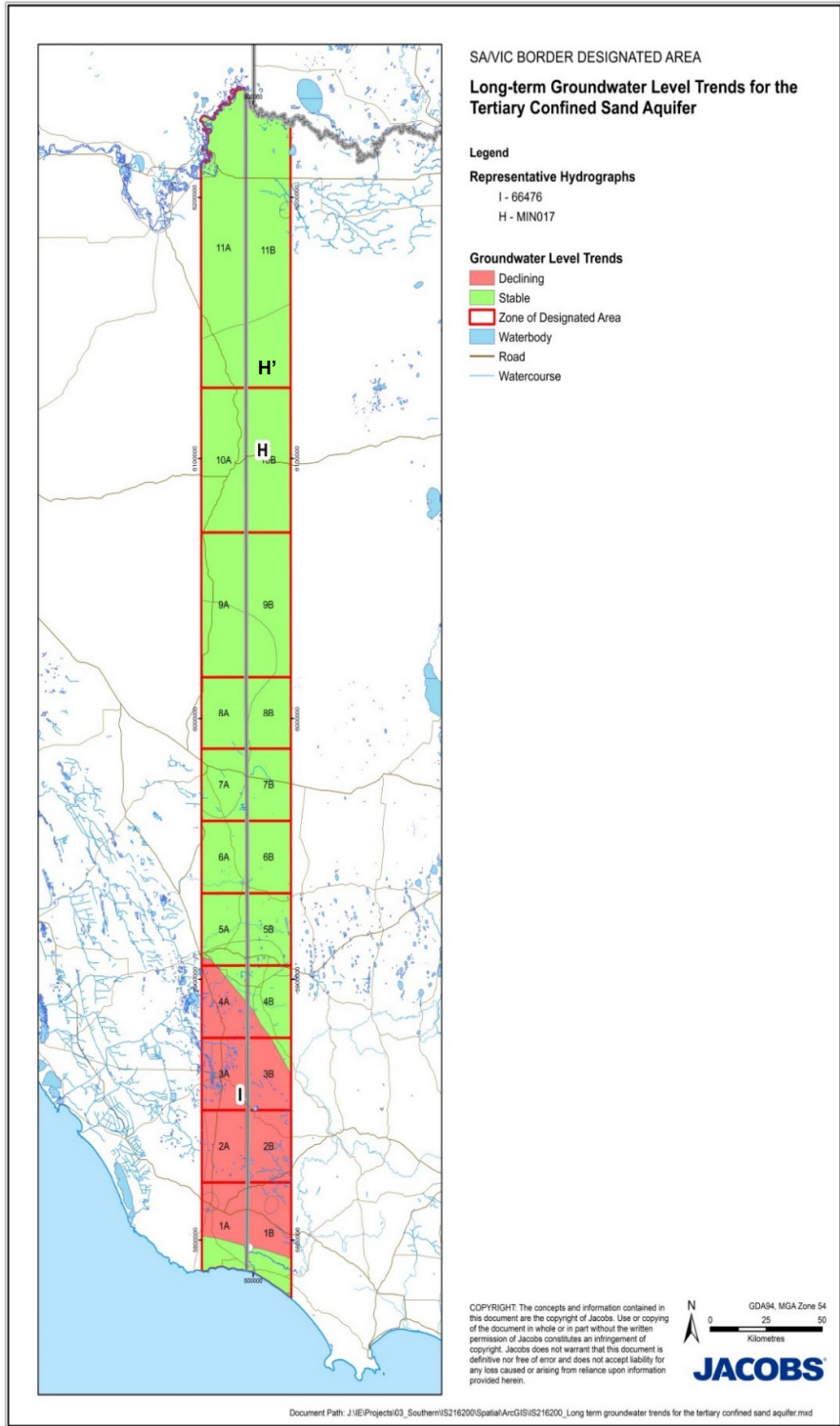


Representative groundwater-level hydrographs as located in map (Fig. 3)

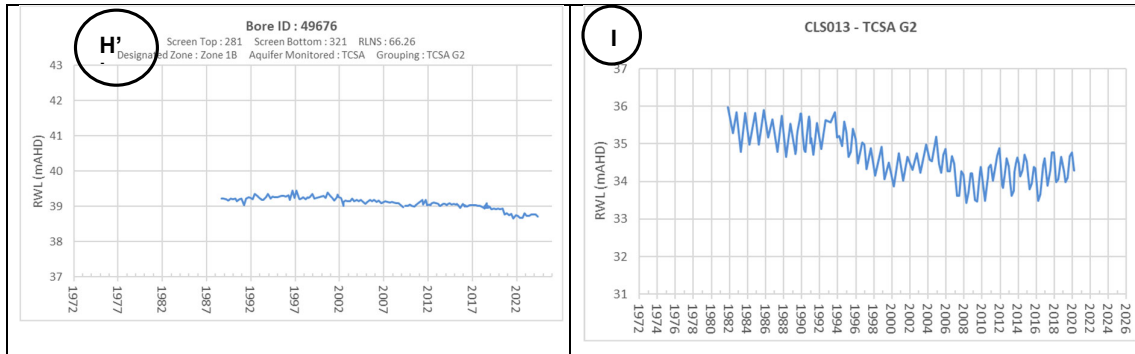


The hydrographs graphs vertical axis reference of “m AHD” is a unit of measurement for vertical elevation, specifically in relation to the Australian Height Datum (AHD), which is the official reference surface for elevation measurements in Australia.

**Figure 4. Groundwater level trends for the Tertiary Confined Sand Aquifer with some representative hydrographs**



Representative groundwater-level hydrographs as located in map (Fig. 4)



The hydrographs graphs vertical axis reference of “mAHAD” is a unit of measurement for vertical elevation, specifically in relation to the Australian Height Datum (AHD), which is the official reference surface for elevation measurements in Australia.