

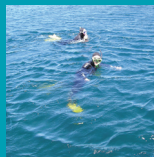
THE BORDER GROUNDWATERS AGREEMENT

Information Sheet 1 of 4



Managing the
Groundwater
Resources across the
South Australian -
Victorian Border

The Border Groundwaters
Agreement



2014

IMPORTANCE OF GROUNDWATER AND POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

In most areas close to the South Australian-Victorian State border, groundwater is the only reliable source of water. It is used for irrigation and for industrial, stock and domestic supplies. Many towns close to the border also rely on groundwater for their public water supply.

Large groundwater withdrawals on one side of the border could affect users on the other side, possibly interfering with their long-term supplies. In addition, groundwater salinity increase can occur due to excessive use of groundwater. To prevent this, the Governments of South Australia and Victoria entered into an agreement for the management of the groundwater resource.

THE BORDER GROUNDWATERS AGREEMENT

The *Groundwater (Border Agreement) Act 1985* came into effect in January 1986 to cooperatively manage the groundwater resources along the state border of South Australia and Victoria.

As understanding of the resource improved and the demand for water increased, there was a need to manage the resource in a more targeted way to take account of aquifer characteristics and specific circumstances. The agreement was therefore amended in 2005 and both states have passed legislation to give effect to the Amendment Agreement.

The Agreement establishes the Border Groundwaters Agreement Review Committee, with membership from both states, as the body responsible for jointly managing these groundwater resources in the two states within a defined area called the Designated Area. The Designated Area, a 40 kilometre wide strip centred on the border and extending for its full length, is divided into 22 Zones with 11 zones in each state (as shown in Figure 1).



These zones and any aquifer in the zone can be divided into two or more sub-zones.

The Agreement provides that the available groundwater shall be shared equitably between the states. It applies to all existing and future bores within the Designated Area except domestic and stock bores which are exempt from the Agreement. Bore construction licences and permits or extraction licences may not be granted or renewed within the Designated Area by either state unless they conform to management prescriptions set by the Agreement.

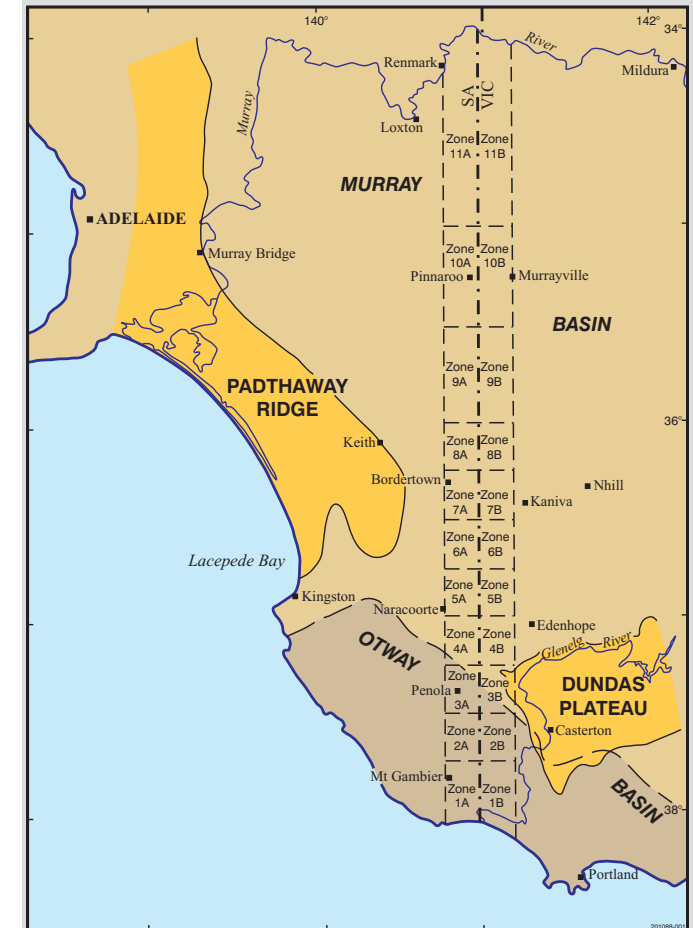


Figure 1 Zones of the Designated Area



Blue Lake

Key features of the Agreement are:

Permissible Annual Volumes

- The Agreement allows for a Permissible Annual Volume to be set for each aquifer in a zone. Each state can allocate groundwater for licensed use up to a limit specified as the Permissible Annual Volume in each Zone of the Designated Area. The amount of groundwater available in each Zone has been calculated taking into account the local hydrogeology.

Allowable Annual Volumes

- The Agreement allows for an Allowable Annual Volume of extraction to be set for any sub-zone or aquifer within a sub-zone in the Designated Area.

Permissible Rate of Groundwater Level Lowering

- The Agreement provides for a rate of drawdown that must not be exceeded.

Permissible Distance from the Border

- The Agreement allows for a distance from the border to be set and, within this area in each state, the Review Committee must agree to any proposed licensed withdrawals of groundwater or bore construction excluding stock and domestic bores.

Permissible Level of Salinity

- A level of salinity can also be specified for each Zone to safeguard groundwater quality. At this stage, no salinity levels have been set for any of the Zones due to the general variation in salinity through the Zones and the difficulty in selecting an appropriate level.

Bore Construction

- The Agreement allows for conditions to be set for the construction of bores to prevent inter-aquifer contamination.

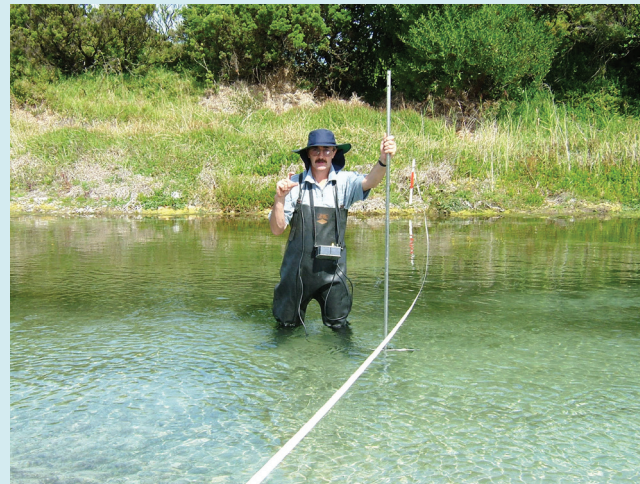
Five Yearly Management Review

- The Agreement specifies that the Review Committee review, at not more than five yearly intervals, the Permissible Annual Volume in relation to each Zone, the Allowable Annual Volume for each sub-zone or aquifer within a sub-zone, and the Permissible Distance from the border.

There is also provision to review the Permissible Rate of Groundwater Level Lowering and the Permissible Levels of Salinity (if set) and to recommend any changes to the Ministers in both states.

The Agreement sets out the framework for groundwater management in the Designated Area. Each state is responsible for water allocation planning and water licensing which need to be consistent with the provisions and management settings established under the Agreement.

In Victoria this is done by the Rural Water Corporations under delegation from the Minister. In South Australia this is undertaken by the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources based on approved water allocation plans developed by the relevant Natural Resources Management Board.



Surface water gauging

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Further information is provided in Information Sheets 2, 3 and 4
- Sheets 2 and 3 present information on the groundwater resources within the Designated Area.
- Sheet 4 presents information on licensing and administrative arrangements in each state.

CONTACTS

For more information on the Border Groundwaters Agreement and/or the groundwater resources within the Designated Area, please contact:

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