

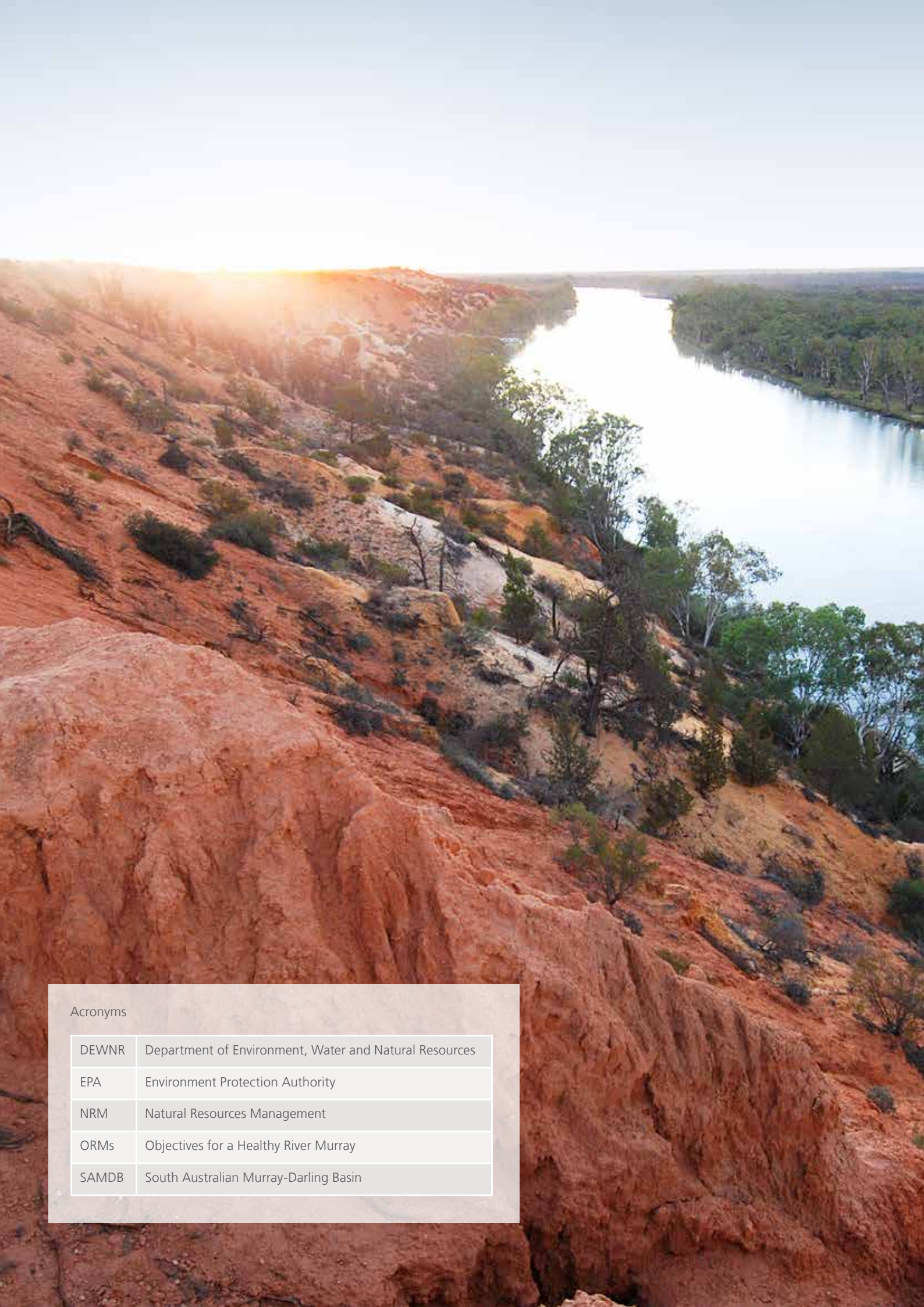
River Murray Act

Implementation Strategy 2014



Government
of South Australia

Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



Acronyms

DEWNR	Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
EPA	Environment Protection Authority
NRM	Natural Resources Management
ORMs	Objectives for a Healthy River Murray
SAMDB	South Australian Murray-Darling Basin

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Background

The River Murray Act Implementation Strategy 2014 (the Strategy) describes priorities and strategies to achieve the Objects of the River Murray Act 2003 and further the Objectives for a Healthy River Murray outlined in this Act.

The Strategy will be used to ensure an effective and coordinated approach to the implementation of the River Murray Act. It seeks alignment with relevant strategies and plans, in particular the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan: South Australian Implementation Strategy 2013-2019, the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Plan, the State Natural Resources Management Plan 2012 and the South Australian Planning Strategy, and focuses on the use of powers and functions of the Act to support these strategies and plans.

River Murray Act 2003

The *River Murray Act 2003* (the Act) commenced on 24 November 2003, as part of the South Australian Government's recognition of the need for improved policy frameworks and integration of activities between state government agencies to ensure adequate protection of the River Murray.

It aims to ensure that all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to protect, restore and enhance the River Murray in recognition of its importance to the South Australian community and economy. The Minister for Water and the River Murray (the Minister) is responsible for the administration of the Act.

The River Murray is defined in the Act as the main stem of the River Murray and its associated natural resources. The natural resources of the River Murray include:

- the River Murray system (all anabranches, tributaries, flood plains, wetlands and estuaries that are in any way connected or associated with the river, and related beds, banks and shores);
- Soil, groundwater, surface water, air, vegetation, animals and ecosystems connected or associated with the River Murray;
- Cultural and natural heritage, amenity and geological values, connected or associated with the River Murray system; and
- Minerals and other substances, and facilities that are subject to the operation of a Mining Act.

The Act plays a key coordinating role in the protection, restoration and enhancement of the River Murray. South Australian Acts that have application to the resources of the Murray-Darling Basin are referred to as 'related operational Acts' by the Act. The Act is designed to interact with the operation of these Acts (and associated regulated activities) that may have an impact on the River Murray, to improve the focus on the River Murray.

The specific related operational Acts are listed below:

- *Aquaculture Act 2001*;
- *Coast Protection Act 1972*;
- *Crown Land Management Act 2009*;
- *Development Act 1993*;
- *Environment Protection Act 1993*;
- *Fisheries Management Act 2007*;
- *Harbors and Navigation Act 1993*;
- *Heritage Places Act 1993*;
- *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981*;
- *Irrigation Act 1994*;
- *Murray-Darling Basin Act 2008*;
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*;
- *Native Vegetation Act 1991*;
- *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*;
- *South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Act 1992*;
- Any mining Act; and
- Any other Act prescribed as a related operational Act by the Regulations.

The Act is taken into consideration when relevant plans, strategies and regulations or amendments to these related operational Acts are being developed and implemented, and when activities are authorised under these Acts to improve the focus on and protection of the River Murray. The administrators of those Acts need to consider the health of the River Murray when exercising their powers and functions. In some cases, they will have to obtain the Minister's approval before issuing licences or other authorisations that relate to the River.

Other legislation (e.g. the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*) may not be a related operational Act, but still maintains an administrative relationship with the Act for the purposes of commenting on relevant issues. The Act also interacts with Commonwealth legislation, plans and programs to recognise the importance of the River Murray, including the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, the *Water Act 2007* and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

Objects of the Act and ORMs

The Act sets Objects, and Objectives for a Healthy River Murray (ORMs), which together guide the effective management of the River Murray.

Summarised generally, the Objects of the Act are to:

- Ensure all reasonable measures are taken to protect the River Murray (recognising its critical importance to the community, unique value from environmental, economic and social perspectives, and the need to ensure the use of the River Murray sustains the wellbeing of people and facilitates the State's economic development);
- Ensure development provides a benefit to, or protection of, the River, while also providing for the economic, social and physical wellbeing of the community;
- Promote and incorporate the principles of ecologically sustainable development into the use and management of the River Murray;
- Recognise and respect the interests, aspiration and views of Aboriginal people and the wider community on how best to use and manage the River Murray;
- Make sure that the significance of the River Murray is taken into account when legislative strategies and plans are being developed or implemented so as to ensure the future health of the River Murray; and
- Ensure the future health, and to recognise the importance, of the River Murray.

These Objects guide the interpretation of the ORMs, which give specific criteria and direction to achieve 'good river health'. The ORMs are categorised under four themes: River health, environmental flows, water quality, and human dimension.

The Objects and ORMs set out a balanced and integrated approach to ensure that the use and management of the River Murray sustains both the environment and the people of South Australia.

Functions and powers of the Minister under the Act

The Minister has a wide range of powers and functions under the Act, including:

- Imposing conditions on statutory authorisations such as development, licence, permit and exemption applications (including refusal of the application);
- Providing input into development plans and/or other agencies' policies;
- Issuing protection, reparation or restraining orders to prevent activities that will or have the potential to cause harm to the River Murray;
- Constructing, maintaining or removing works;
- Negotiating with landowners to secure compliance or protect against harm (referring to the duty of care);
- Undertaking education and awareness raising activities;
- Issuing policies, guidelines and factsheets;
- Entering management agreements with landowners to require activities to be undertaken in a specified way, or require water or other natural resources of the River to be managed in a specified way;
- Using bonds to insure against harm caused to the River by certain activities;
- Designating River Murray Protection Areas for different purposes or for purposes under other Acts;
- Prohibiting or restricting specified activities in the River Murray Protection Areas, or prescribing requirements or conditions; and
- Requiring proponents to off-set any harmful impacts of their activities.

Strategic Drivers

Murray-Darling Basin Plan

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan) was developed under the *Water Act 2007* (Cth) to provide for the integrated and sustainable management of water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin. Commencing in 2012, the Basin Plan guides the management of water resources across the Murray-Darling Basin, in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory.

In South Australia, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan: South Australian Implementation Strategy 2013-2019 (Basin Plan Implementation Strategy) outlines key actions that will be pursued to ensure the Basin Plan is fully integrated into South Australia's water management arrangements.

The Basin Plan Implementation Strategy aims to achieve a number of outcomes:

- Return of a volume of water that is sufficient, based on best available science, to meet key environmental outcomes in South Australia;
- Environmental flows delivered to help protect and restore River Murray wetlands and floodplains, including the Chowilla Floodplain and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth;
- Secure, reliable and good quality water supplies that support healthy and productive industries, communities and ecosystems;
- Regional communities strengthened through investment that helps drive value-adding and diversification opportunities; and
- Effective implementation of the Basin Plan and associated reforms to achieve beneficial outcomes for the River and its communities.

An alignment between the Strategy and the key outcomes of the Basin Plan Implementation Strategy is important to ensure that the implementation and administration of the Act supports the implementation of the Basin Plan in South Australia. This Strategy addresses the achievement of the above outcomes and specific Basin Plan implementation activities, in areas such as the delivery of environmental flows, value-adding and economic diversification, water quality management, and supporting healthy industries, communities and ecosystems.

Review of the first River Murray Act Implementation Strategy

The first Strategy (dated 2006) was reviewed in 2011, in consultation with prescribed persons, bodies and authorities, and the broader community (Appendix 1). This review recommended that an amended Strategy be prepared that addresses the following issues:

- Inappropriate development and industry practices (impact of illegal developments such as, replacement dwellings and riverfront developments, irrigation and farming practices.);
- Water quality (managing salinity, wastewater, stormwater runoff and pollution);
- Climate variability (managing floods, droughts, variable water levels and future water availability, and the potential effects on regional communities and economies); and
- Erosion and bank stability (including riverbank collapse).

Regional NRM Plan

The South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Plan (Regional NRM Plan) aims to support ecologically sustainable development in the region and achieve an appropriate balance between environmental, social, economic and cultural outcomes through the use of natural resources.

The purpose of the Regional NRM Plan is to assess the current state and condition of the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin (SAMDB) region's natural resources (using a systems approach), the current and likely future process that threaten them, and consider the opportunities for their protection and management. It sets long-term targets (referred to as Resource Condition Targets) for the desired state and condition of the region's natural resources and describes broad strategies and actions required to achieve these targets.

It identifies five asset classes: land, water, atmosphere, biodiversity and people, and determines resource condition targets for each of these classes, out to 2030. Many of these targets are relevant in the context of the Objects of the Act and ORMs, and can potentially be supported by the powers and functions of the Act. Relevant resource condition targets include:

- Improve water quality to achieve the regionally-endorsed environmental values by 2030;
- Water is available to enhance and maintain the ecological character of water-dependent ecosystems;

- By 2030, water-dependent ecosystems in priority areas maintain ecological function, resilience and biodiversity;
- No species or ecosystem moves to a higher risk category and 50% of species move to a lower category by 2030;
- A 10% improvement in soil and land condition from 2008/2009 levels by 2030;
- 80% increase in the number of people managing natural resources sustainably by 2030; and
- Increase protection and preservation of Aboriginal culture by 80% by 2030.

Water allocation plans for prescribed water resources in the SAMDB region are legal documents (forming part of the Regional NRM Plan) that set out how water resources can be taken and used. It is recognised that some of the powers and functions under the Act can support the objectives of these plans.

State NRM Plan

This Strategy is required under the Act to take into account the State Natural Resources Management Plan (and the South Australian Planning Strategy). The State Natural Resources Management Plan South Australia 2012–2017 (State NRM Plan) promotes the sustainable and integrated management of South Australia's natural resources. The State NRM Plan is at the centre of the state's natural resource management system, and provides the strategic blueprint for NRM boards and state government agencies to develop their own specific plans (such as the Regional NRM Plan described above). The State NRM Plan establishes the direction for South Australia in its management of natural resources, by providing a framework for regional NRM boards, working with state government agencies, to develop regional plans and programs.

The goals and guiding targets of the State NRM Plan have been considered in the development of the priorities and strategies of this Strategy. For example, there is a strong emphasis in the State NRM Plan on community engagement and the value of local knowledge (including Aboriginal knowledge) in land use planning and the management of natural resources. This Strategy (through the Act) provides opportunities to strengthen partnerships between state, and local government, NRM boards, industry and non-government organisations.

South Australian Planning Strategy

The South Australian Planning Strategy comprises a plan for greater Adelaide and seven regional plans. The relevant plans to be considered in the preparation of the Strategy, as they relate to the River Murray system, are the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide (30-Year Plan), and the Murray and Mallee Region Plan (Murray and Mallee Region Plan).

Adelaide's 30-Year Plan was released in 2010 and outlines how the South Australian Government will balance population and economic growth with the need to preserve the environment and protect the heritage, history and character of greater Adelaide. It seeks to achieve this through the creation of inclusive, vibrant and liveable communities, whilst protecting the regional hinterlands and primary production lands as well as sustaining natural resources.

The Murray and Mallee Region Plan provides regional-level guidance for councils as they undertake their strategic management plans, and review and amend their development plans.

This Strategy aligns with principles of both the 30-Year Plan and the Murray and Mallee Region Plan. For example, the Strategy is well placed to support principles such as heritage and character protection and enhancement, economic growth and competitiveness. These principles are supported in particular through primary production and tourism, climate change resilience, environmental protection, restoration and enhancement, natural resources management and community engagement.

Threats

The following threats were identified by stakeholders during the review of the previous Strategy (Appendix 1), as well as through the State of the Environment South Australia report (2013), SAMDB Regional NRM Plan and South Australia's formal responses to the draft Basin Plan. Together with the strategic drivers, they help guide the priorities and strategies required to advance the Objects of the Act and ORMs.

Threats to a healthy River Murray	Impacts
Unsustainable consumptive use of surface and groundwater resources in the River Murray system.	Water sharing issues between consumptive users, change in natural hydrological regimes, insufficient water for aquatic ecosystem health, loss of agricultural productivity and earnings, reduced drinking water supply.
Inappropriate land and/or water management practices (including agricultural practices) in the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Region.	Nutrient run-off, soil erosion, turbidity, sedimentation, chemical and biological contamination in the River Murray, nutrient enrichment (leading to algal growth).
Urbanisation, and stormwater and wastewater discharge into the River Murray system (includes septic tanks and vessel discharges).	Pollution, nutrient enrichment (leading to algal growth), high fine-sediment loads, reduction in water quality more generally.
Exposure of acid-sulfate soils in the River Murray system during low flows or drought.	Release of heavy metals from soil, various impacts on aquatic ecosystem health including death of plants and animals, loss of agricultural productivity.
Inappropriate or illegal development (inconsistent with local planning regulations and the Act) within River Murray Protection Areas.	Broad range of impacts on natural, physical, human, social or economic values, depending on the nature of the development. Could include impacts on the environment, amenity or heritage.
Saline discharge from local and regional groundwater into the River Murray, and increased salinity during low flows (from groundwater inflows and evaporation) and post flood.	Salinisation of fresh water, leading to impacts on aquatic ecosystem health, loss of agricultural productivity and earnings, reduced drinking water quality (and associated impacts on human health).
Inability to apply works or measures, including the use of locks, weirs and other diversion infrastructure, to appropriately regulate River Murray flows.	Undesired change in hydrological flow regimes, reduced ability to deliver environmental water flows, inability to manage natural flood events, inadequate flows for irrigated industries and other consumptive purposes, reduction in water quality, loss of access to water, failure to deliver on obligations of the Basin Plan.
Inadequate legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines to support value-adding, economic diversification, increased environmental flows and adaptation to climate variability in the River Murray system.	Failure to manage the River in such a way that advances the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, or supports implementation of the Basin Plan.
Ineffective inter-agency management of the River Murray and implementation of Basin Plan activities (including a lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders), both within South Australia and across the Murray-Darling Basin.	Loss of opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders, loss of opportunity to achieve beneficial outcomes for the River and its communities.
Climate variability (particularly floods and drought) in the River Murray system and a limited number of climate refuge areas. Also includes a range of threats (including those listed in this table) that reduce the ability for natural systems to adapt to climate variability.	Numerous impacts on natural aquatic and riparian ecosystems and biodiversity, loss of irrigated horticultural plantings, riverbank collapse (structural damage to the riverbank, embankments and infrastructure), exposure of acid-sulfate soils, reduced water quality.
Inadequate community awareness of, or deliberate disregard to, the Act and its administrative procedures.	Failure to manage the River in such a way that advances the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.
Native vegetation clearance within the Murray-Darling Basin.	High fine-sediment loads, loss of native habitat, species loss, reduction in biodiversity, impacts on amenity.
Intensification of recreational uses of the River Murray.	Riverbank erosion (from vessel wash), various impacts on amenity and social and human values.
Loss of Aboriginal traditional knowledge and local knowledge.	Failure to manage the River Murray using the best available information and knowledge, loss of cultural and local values.
Pest plants and animals.	Broad range of impacts on natural, physical, human, social or economic values, depending on the species and their extent.

Priorities

A healthy River Murray delicately balances long-term environmental, economic and social sustainability, and recognises the interconnectedness of these elements. To this end, three priorities have been developed to protect, restore and enhance the health of the River Murray. These priorities have been developed to align with both the Objects of the Act and the objectives of the Basin Plan Implementation Strategy, and support other key plans and Strategies identified previously.



Priority 1:

Managing natural resources

The strategies aligned to this priority contribute to the effective management of natural resources associated with the River Murray system. Not only are healthy natural resources vital for the environment, they are essential for the productivity of industries and communities associated with the River Murray.



Priority 2:

Supporting regional development and industry productivity

The strategies aligned to this priority enable an integrated and coordinated approach to regional development, and support productive industries associated with the River Murray. Appropriate development and sustainable regional economies drive healthy communities.



Priority 3:

Facilitating community participation and understanding

The strategies aligned to this priority support healthy communities through supporting regional consultation, recognising and utilising local knowledge in the management of the River Murray, capacity-building, education, and the sharing of information about the River. A healthy River Murray ecosystem is important for the economic, social and cultural prosperity of communities along the length of the River.

Strategies

The following nine strategies have been developed to align with the functions and powers of the Act, advance the Objects of the Act and ORMs, and address the strategic drivers, threats and priorities. All strategies align to at least two of the priorities, and most contribute to all three.

Strategy	Relevant Priority		
	Natural Resources	Development and Productivity	Community Participation & Understanding
1. Assess statutory development and other licence, permit and exemption applications, and direct relevant authorities to apply conditions on, or refuse, activities not consistent with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.	✓	✓	✓
2. Develop, implement and maintain relevant regulations, policies and guidelines that support the transparent and defensible administration of the Act.	✓	✓	
3. Support the development and implementation of relevant state and local government plans (and related policies) to ensure consistency with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.	✓	✓	
4. Undertake works and measures that advance the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, including the construction, operation, maintenance and removal of infrastructure.	✓	✓	
5. Enforce compliance with the Act, and where required, use Protection Orders, Reparation Orders and/or Interim Restraining Orders to protect or restore the health of the River.	✓	✓	✓
6. Use regulations to manage existing activities in River Murray Protection Areas that cause harm to the River Murray or impede the restoration of River health, and consider the development of more targeted River Murray Protection Areas in response to emerging issues.	✓	✓	
7. Consult with relevant persons, bodies and authorities who have an association with the River Murray (including Aboriginal people and the wider community) on activities required to advance the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, and utilise Aboriginal traditional knowledge and local knowledge in the management of the River Murray.	✓	✓	✓
8. Facilitate education required to effectively administer and ensure compliance with the Act, and promote the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.	✓	✓	✓
9. Continue to clarify and streamline roles, responsibilities and processes to support a coordinated and integrated approach to the management of the River Murray among government agencies and local councils.	✓	✓	✓

1. Assess statutory development and other licence, permit and exemption applications, and direct relevant authorities to apply conditions on, or refuse, activities not consistent with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.

The referral mechanism is used to assess statutory development and other licence, permit and exemption applications. To further support this mechanism, the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) operates a 'one-stop shop' that makes applicants aware of other obligations or requirements under the related operational Acts. This improves efficiency, provides clarity on obligations under other legislation, and allows a single agency to act as a mediator when there are conflicting requirements. Opportunities to further integrate and streamline the referral process will also be identified, including through additional exemptions to statutory authorisations.

The use of the referral mechanism for planning and development decisions is crucial to ensure developments such as marinas, mines and subdivisions, as well moorings, retaining walls and other structures, do not harm the natural resources of the River Murray, or become at risk from variable water levels. It is also crucial to prevent new constraints to environmental water delivery and changes in River Murray operations.

Outcome: *Harm to the River Murray and future constraints are prevented or minimised, by directing that conditions be applied to statutory development and other licence, permit and exemption applications to make them consistent with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, and if conditions cannot make a proposal consistent, then directing its refusal.*

2. Develop, implement and maintain relevant regulations, policies and guidelines that support the transparent and defensible administration of the Act.

Regulations, policies and guidelines are required to support the effective administration of the Act (advancing the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs) and guide future programs. State and local government agencies are encouraged to review and/or update existing regulations, policies and guidelines as required, and develop new policy in response to emerging threats. New regulations, policies or guidelines could be developed in the areas of value-adding and economic diversification, environmental flows, sustainable irrigation, water-sensitive urban design, climate change adaptation and sustainable water technology (e.g. water recycling, and stormwater capture, storage and use). These ensure that administration of the Act takes place in a transparent and robust manner, and ensures development proponents are aware of likely requirements upfront.

Outcome: *Regulations, policies and guidelines are effectively developed, implemented and maintained, resulting in the transparent and robust administration of the Act.*

3. Support the development and implementation of relevant state and local government plans (and related policies) to ensure consistency with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.

The Act supports the development and implementation of state and local government plans and related policies, such as development plan amendments. This ensures relevant plans are consistent with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs. Notably, it is necessary to ensure that fundamental provisions that contribute to best-practice River management are retained during the development of new plans or policies.

Outcome: *Relevant state and local government plans and policies (including development plan amendments) are consistent with the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, and where altered, maintain or improve the capacity of government agencies (including councils) to manage the River Murray.*

4. Undertake works and measures that advance the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, including the construction, operation, maintenance and removal of infrastructure.

The Act has the ability to undertake ‘works and measures’, including the construction, operation, maintenance or removal of infrastructure (e.g. levee banks, pumps, weirs, regulators, salt interception schemes) to manage a wide range of threats to the River Murray. Works and measures can be performed as part of large-scale, targeted programs, or in emergency situations as a last resort, particularly during droughts and floods.

Works and measures help to facilitate the delivery and regulation of environmental water flows (and associated constraints), manage acid-sulphate soils, and maintain a natural hydrological regime. In some cases, environmental works and measures can help derive additional benefits from the environmental water provided under the Basin Plan. For example, when there are insufficient flows to maintain and/or protect ecological processes, environmental regulators and weirs can be used to enable broad-scale inundation of a limited number of floodplains. Flow regulators can also be used to manage wetlands.

These structures allow for wetting and drying of near-channel riparian habitats, low-lying temporary wetlands and areas of a floodplain to maximise ecological benefits. In addition, creating in-channel flow pulses can reintroduce flowing habitats to the River channel and major anabranches, and provide critical resources and cues for the breeding of various native fish species, as well as deliver water to the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth.

Ideally, infrastructure should be constructed to mimic natural habitats. Replacing culverts and banks with more ecologically-appropriate water control structures can provide the capacity to deliver variable flow and water levels throughout wetland systems and improve connectivity for fish movement. Improving connectivity between the River, its floodplain and its estuary, also improves ecosystem functioning and processes such as carbon and nutrient cycling.

Outcome: *Works and measures, including the construction, operation, maintenance and removal of infrastructure, are undertaken to manage threats to the River Murray and support the delivery of environmental flows, resulting in the prevention or minimisation of harm to the River.*

5. Enforce compliance with the Act, and where required, use Protection Orders, Reparation Orders and/or Interim Restraining Orders to protect or restore the health of the River.

Orders can be issued under the Act to ensure compliance with the general duty of care and statutory authorisations, take actions to address damage to the River Murray, or suspend / prevent activities that cause (or may cause) harm to the River Murray (e.g. inappropriate land and/or water management practices, stormwater or wastewater discharge, illegal developments, native vegetation clearance and certain recreational activities). Voluntary compliance measures will be encouraged as a first step in addressing compliance with the Act. However, compliance officers will continue to be trained as authorised officers under the Act. Authorised officers will ensure an appropriate compliance and enforcement presence, undertaking tasks relating to the administration, operation or enforcement of the Act (including the issuing of orders).

Outcome: *Compliance with the Act is effectively enforced, and Protection, Reparation and/or Restraining Orders are issued to prevent or minimise harm to the River Murray.*

6. Use regulations to manage existing activities in River Murray Protection Areas that cause harm to the River Murray or impede the restoration of River health, and consider the development of more targeted River Murray Protection Areas in response to emerging issues.

The *River Murray Regulations 2003* outline two River Murray Protection Areas (RMPAs): the River Murray Floodplain Area and the River Murray Tributaries Area. These RMPAs will continue to be used for prohibiting or restricting certain activities in these areas that have the potential to cause harm to the River Murray (the Act provides the ability to develop regulations to regulate existing activities in the RMPAs).

Where required, new RMPAs will be developed under specific Acts to manage emerging issues. The opportunities, costs and benefits of using these powers will be explored further.

Outcome: *River Murray Protection Areas adequately prohibit or restrict activities which cause (or may cause) harm to the River Murray.*

7. Consult with relevant persons, bodies and authorities who have an association with the River Murray (including Aboriginal people and the wider community) on activities required to advance the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs, and utilise Aboriginal traditional knowledge and local knowledge in the management of the River Murray.

Adapting to future challenges requires state and local government agencies, non-government organisations, industry groups, Aboriginal people and local communities to participate and respond to these challenges together, in the recognition that people have strong cultural and historical relationships with the River Murray. The Act supports effective consultation with local communities connected to the River Murray (particularly prescribed persons, bodies and authorities). Opportunities for community consultation include the development of environmental watering plans, water resource plans and other strategic projects.

In particular, the Act recognises the importance of traditional knowledge held by Aboriginal people in the management of the River. As such, relevant Aboriginal groups will be engaged in a culturally appropriate manner to provide advice on River management issues. Agreements outline how government agencies and other organisations will work with Aboriginal people to manage the River (these include the River Murray and Crown Lands Indigenous Land Use Agreement and the Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement). The Act also promotes the active and informed participation of local communities in the implementation of management solutions. The ORMs (particularly the human dimension objectives) place an emphasis on responsive and adaptive management approaches that consider community interests and the value of local knowledge.

To maximise the effectiveness of community engagement activities, it is recommended that consultation activities align with South Australia's Better Together: Principles of Engagement framework, and other relevant engagement strategies (such as regional or Aboriginal engagement strategies). The Better Together framework provides support and guidance on how to involve people in a decision-making process.

Outcome: *Successful, cooperative management of the River Murray (advancing the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs) is achieved through appropriate consultation with, and use of information held by, Aboriginal people and the local community.*

8. Facilitate education required to effectively administer and ensure compliance with the Act, and promote the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs.

The State NRM Plan and the South Australian Planning Strategy both focus on increasing the understanding of natural resource management issues within the community. Indeed, education is vitally important to achieve and maintain a healthy River Murray, particularly education relating to the Act's duty of care requirements. Education needs in the community will be informed by relevant threats, impacts, emerging trends and levels of compliance. Importantly, education (on issues such as illegal developments, riverfront developments, irrigation, sustainable water use, sustainable agricultural practices, vegetation clearance, pest plans and animals, recreational activities, riverbank collapse, sand dumping and alleged breaches of water restrictions during low flows), together with information on the Act's duty of care, roles and responsibilities of government agencies, and referral mechanisms, will support the avoidance of harm to the River Murray.

Industry may also benefit from information relating to current and emerging issues such as sustainable water use, investment opportunities, value-adding, economic diversification, regional development, irrigation efficiency, water-sensitive urban design, land management practices, climate change adaptation activities, and the importance of River health for productivity.

Outcome: *Improved knowledge and understanding by the community, of issues relating to the protection of the River Murray, resulting in a decrease in the number of incidents of harm against the River Murray.*



9. Continue to clarify and streamline roles, responsibilities and processes to support a coordinated and integrated approach to the management of the River Murray among government agencies and local councils.

A continued effort is required to clarify and streamline roles, responsibilities and processes required to manage the River Murray successfully. The Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, and local councils (as planning authorities), undertake a range of activities that support the administration of the Act and advance the Objects of the Act and/or ORMs. In particular, local councils play a key role in the development assessment and referral process.

In addition, government agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and DEWNR both undertake key policy, planning, management, modelling, construction, research and monitoring programs relating to the health of the River.

The SAMDB and adjacent NRM regions (South East, South Australian Arid Lands and Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges) undertake a wide range of collaborative projects relating to the management of natural resources, including surface water, both within and between regions. Examples include a low flows project across the Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges, and projects relating to the management of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth. It is important that regional NRM boards work together with government agencies during the planning and delivery of projects.

The South Australian Government, through the Minister, will continue to work with upstream water managers, water holders (including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder) and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, to maximise environmental, economic and social benefits to the River.

Various government agencies report on the health of the River Murray and associated programs. For example, every five years, the EPA publishes a State of the Environment report, which details the state of the River Murray and its associated threats.

DEWNR reports annually to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority on a wide range of activities relating to the River Murray and SAMDB water resource management, and develops annual reports under the Act. The SAMDB NRM Board reports annually on progress against the Regional NRM Plan.

The clarification and potential streamlining of roles and responsibilities (including those relating to reporting) will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering River Murray programs, and provide more clarity to the community. Coordination and integration of the Act's functions will be pursued, such as through the coordination of various networks involved with the management of the River Murray. The Basin Plan Implementation Program (delivering the Basin Plan Implementation Strategy) provides an opportunity for further integration and coordination.

Outcome: *The roles, responsibilities and processes of government agencies and councils are clearly understood, resulting in a coordinated and integrated approach to the management of the River Murray.*

Review

A review of the Strategy will be undertaken five years after the adoption of this Strategy (2019), with a focus on the achievement of outcomes and identification of emerging strategic drivers and threats. If required, amendments will be made to prior to this date, following appropriate consultation with stakeholders (including prescribed persons, bodies and authorities).



Appendix

Consultation on the review of the Strategy

Consultation on the review of the 2006 Strategy took place between April and May 2011. Various methods were used to seek written and verbal input from key stakeholders (including over 140 agencies, councils, industry bodies and special interest groups) and the general public, such as:

- Letters to key stakeholders inviting them to complete a questionnaire;
- Workshops with stakeholders to discuss issues relevant to the review;
- An online consultation page and survey on the Water for Good website;
- Emails sent to subscribers and other known stakeholders, to promote the survey and invite responses via a consultation mailbox; and
- Presentations at key stakeholder forums to promote the review, provide background information on the Strategy, and invite input through the online survey.

The *River Murray Regulations 2003* prescribe authorities and bodies for consultation, which have relevance for the review of the Strategy:

- The Local Government Association of South Australia;
- The Murray and Mallee Local Government Association;
- The Southern Hills LGA Inc.;
- The River Murray Catchment Water Management Board;
- The Aboriginal Heritage Committee established under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*; and
- The Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.

These organisations were contacted through a formal letter that invited responses to a questionnaire. The SAMDB NRM Board was also invited to participate at a consultation workshop.

Thirty-seven completed questionnaires, online survey responses and comments were received. Surveys were analysed, in conjunction with input from the workshops, to inform the findings of the review. The commitment of communities to on-ground works reflects a vast amount of knowledge and understanding of the threats facing the River Murray, as well as a desire to be actively involved in determining the priorities, management and use of the River Murray.



Government of South Australia
 Department of Environment,
 Water and Natural Resources



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