

Polda

Eyre Peninsula Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems monitoring site

2020 Report Card

Summary

Type of site: Licensed extraction monitoring site.

Status: **Green**, improving trends in the short term (2016 to 2020).
Improvement in condition (2020) likely due to early and regular rainfall.

Red Gums:



Condition
Good



Trend
Improving
Short term
(2016 to 2020)



Trend
More data required
Long term

Ground water levels:



Trend
Declining
Short term
(2016 to 2020)

Climate: Above average maximum temperatures and decline in winter rainfall and recharge events.

This Report Card should be read in conjunction with the Overview, which provides information about Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) monitoring and summary information for all monitored GDE sites.

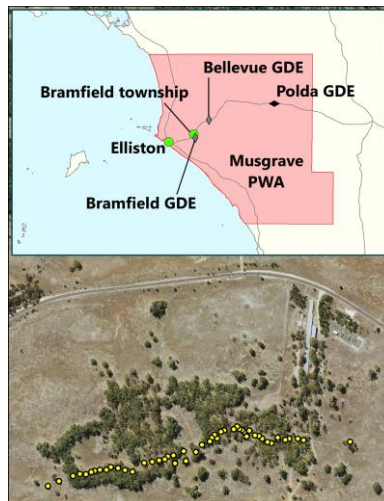


Adult Red Gum at Polda assessed as 'very good' condition in Oct 2020.

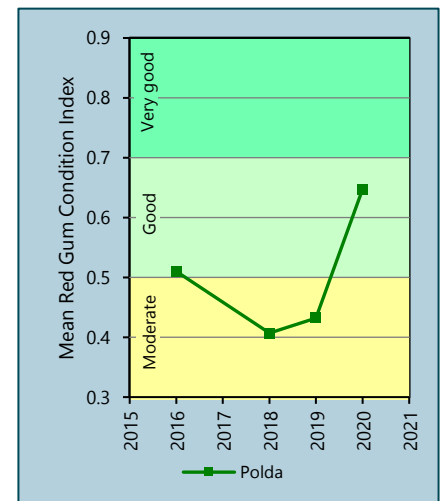
The **Polda** Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems monitoring site is situated thirty three kilometres east of Bramfield, on the Birdseye Highway. The site includes a remnant patch (approximately 65 ha) of Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) Woodland. The understorey is dominated by native and introduced grasses.

The Polda GDE site is monitored to assess the impacts of licensed water extraction from the Polda groundwater lens in the Musgrave Prescribed Wells Area. There are a number of users who hold licenses to extract a limited amount of water for private commercial purposes. Water extraction information can be [found on WaterConnect](#) in the *Musgrave Prescribed Wells Area 2018-19 groundwater status overview*.

There is also extraction of water for stock and domestic purposes for which a license is not necessary. This extraction is assumed to be low compared to extraction for licensed consumptive purposes, and there is a low likelihood of it having any impact on the GDE.



Polda site map
(yellow dots represent 50 surveyed trees)



Graph 1 Change in Red Gum Condition Index at Polda from 2016 to 2020

Red Gum condition

Tree condition monitoring is carried out in late October to early November. First completed in 2016, monitoring has been repeated annually since 2018. In 2016 the average Red Gum Condition Index (RCI) score was 0.51. There was some decline in condition in 2018 and 2019, but condition improved in 2020 (average RCI score of 0.65). This shows a 14% improvement in Red Gum condition since 2016. The dataset is, however, too short to enable determination of any long term trends. The higher RCI measured in 2020 can be attributed to high levels of reproduction (flower and fruit) and tip growth observed in the trees.

Groundwater and climate assessment

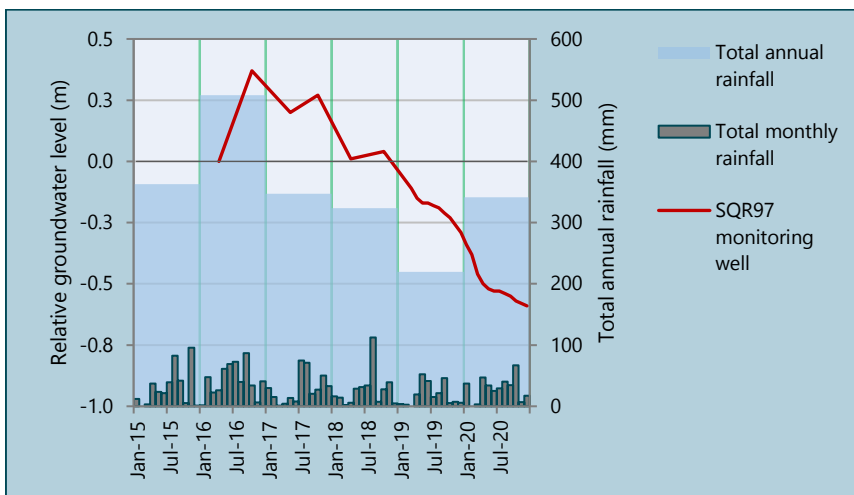
Although an improvement in Red Gum condition was evident in 2020, groundwater levels continued to decline (approx. 30 cm) at Polda (Graph 2).

Although located on a different groundwater lens, similar decline in groundwater levels was observed at Bramfield and the control site Bellevue (also approx. 30 cm). This indicates the decline can be attributed to factors that are relatively consistent across the three sites, specifically reduced recharge and increasing temperature, rather than being caused by licensed extraction which varies significantly across the sites.

As detailed below, graphs on the right show climatic factors possibly contributing to groundwater decline, but also improvement in Red Gum condition:

- Total annual rainfall increased from 220 mm in 2019 to 341 mm in 2020 (Graph 2), but remained 45 mm below the long term¹ mean annual rainfall.
- In 2020 there was no month with high total rainfall (Graph 2), as can generally be seen in the long term record¹. In addition, the maximum daily rainfall was 18% less than the long term¹ mean. The combination of these two factors, while not a direct measure of rainfall intensity and duration, are an indication that rainfall in 2020 was of lower than average intensity and duration.
- Temperatures remained hotter than usual, with the annual average of the daily maximum temperature 0.2°C above the long term¹ mean (Graph 3).

Rainfall intensity and duration, and not just volume, are important for groundwater recharge. Although total annual rainfall increased, it was probably of lower intensity and duration. This, combined with an increase in maximum temperatures, could result in water being available in the upper soil profile, but NOT infiltrating deeper to contribute to groundwater recharge. The increased water in the upper soil profile would be immediately available to the Red Gums, likely resulting in improved tree condition despite a decline in groundwater levels.

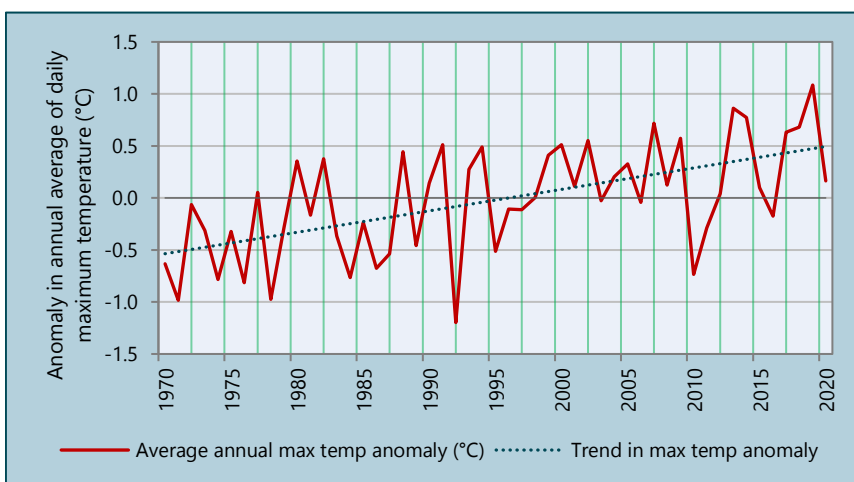


Graph 2 Total annual and total monthly rainfall^{^^}, and change in groundwater levels^{**} at one monitoring well, SQR97

Notes:

^{^^}Rainfall data for 2016 to 2018 is obtained from the Bureau of Meteorology station, Mount Wedge (number 18056). Rainfall data for 2019 and 2020 is site specific data obtained from the rainfall gauge installed at the Polda GDE site.

^{**}The groundwater levels shown for monitoring well SQR97 are relative to the groundwater level at the start of the monitoring period, which is shown as zero.



Graph 3 Anomaly in annual average of daily maximum temperature [^] from 1970 to 2020

Note:

[^] This is the difference between the annual average of the daily maximum temperature for any one year and the long term¹ mean of the annual average of the daily maximum temperature. Maximum daily temperature is measured at the Bureau of Meteorology station, Mount Wedge (number 18056).

¹All long term averages are for the period 1 Jan 1889 to 31 Dec 2020.

Monitoring into the future

Tree condition monitoring will continue on a yearly basis. As time goes on, more data will allow for the identification of any long term trends in the GDE condition.

New monitoring infrastructure was installed at Polda in 2019 to improve the site specific accuracy of data collection. Additions include:

- a water level data-logger at one well; and
- a rain gauge to measure rainfall intensity and amount.

For more information

Access the full report on assessment of Red Gum condition in 2018 [here](#):

Muller K. L., N.J. Souter and Australian Water Technology (2019). *Eyre Peninsula Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem Data Analysis: Red Gum tree condition data (five sites)*. A report for Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula, Department for Environment and Water, Port Lincoln, South Australia.

Contact: **Manager – Planning and Engagement**

P (08) 8688 3111