

Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse

Allocating water from the River Murray



Background

The Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse (the Plan) includes principles to guide allocating water from the River Murray, including during dry times when there may not be enough water to meet the needs of all water users, including the environment.

Water available for allocation from the River Murray comes from South Australia's River Murray Entitlement of up to 1,850 Gigalitres (GL) per year under the *Murray-Darling Basin Agreement* (the Agreement). The Plan sets out how this Entitlement will be shared, and provides for a transparent process for making allocation decisions so that when water availability is low, water users can plan and prepare for the dry conditions.

The approach to allocating water was developed through the amendment of the 2017 Plan, in collaboration with the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board's community-based River Murray Advisory Committee (RMAC) and through extensive consultation with key stakeholders and the community.

Changes were made to the water allocation framework in 2019 to meet the requirements of the Murray Darling Basin Plan and to include the Adelaide Desalination Plant in River Murray allocation decisions. The fundamental approach to allocating water has not changed from the 2017 Plan.

How is the volume of water available to South Australia from the River Murray determined?

In most years, South Australia receives its full Entitlement of 1,850 GL, which is made up of:

1. Dilution and Loss Entitlement – 696 GL
2. Consumptive Entitlement – 1,154 GL

However, in dry years the Consumptive Entitlement may not be available in full. This is the source of water that can be made available for consumptive purposes, including for irrigation and critical human water needs (CHWN). The water allocation framework sets out the approach for sharing water, and takes into account economic, social and environmental considerations.

The actual volume of Entitlement that South Australia receives each year is determined by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) in accordance with the water sharing rules of the Agreement. These rules set out how water must be shared between South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria.



How is water allocated?

Chapter 5 of Plan includes the water allocation framework. How the framework applies is outlined below and in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Once advised by the MDBA on the Entitlement volume, the principles in the Plan guide the process for allocating the water to water users.

The Plan:

1. identifies the four consumptive pools in the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse;
2. provides details on how the volume within each consumptive pool will be calculated;
3. provides principles for guiding the Minister for Environment and Water in determining the volume of water available for allocation from each consumptive pool; and
4. determines how water will be allocated to licence holders.

Allocation decisions are made based on the volume of Entitlement available to South Australia, the volume of water held under South Australia's storage right, and the requirements for Critical Human Water Needs (CHWN), irrigation and the environment.

The water allocation framework outlines how water will be shared, including during dry periods when there may not be enough water available to meet the needs of all water users.

Consumptive Pools and Classes

The Plan identifies four consumptive pools. This allows water to be allocated to different water users with different rules, including whether the water can be traded or 'carried over'. The consumptive pools are further divided into classes of water so that, if necessary, water allocation can be prioritised within a pool. Table 1 outlines each consumptive pool and associated class of water use. Further information on classes and consumptive pools can be found in the [Consumptive Pools](#) fact sheet.

Overview of the Water Allocation Framework

Figure 1 illustrates how South Australia's Entitlement is allocated to water users, including the environment, and to meet transportation losses and maintain water quality.

A volume of 696 GL is provided to meet some of South Australia's operational losses and provide salinity dilution. This is the **dilution and loss** component of South Australia's Entitlement.

Up to 204 GL is provided for **critical human water needs** (CHWN). CHWN comes from the *All Purpose Consumptive Pool* (via classes 1, 2 and 5) and the *Metropolitan Adelaide Consumptive Pool* (Class 6).

CHWN is the water needed to meet core human consumption requirements for those that rely on the River Murray. CHWN are the highest priority for allocation after dilution and loss. The actual volume of CHWN required, both in the current and following year, can change from year to year depending on how much water can be provided to Metropolitan Adelaide from other sources, such as the Mount Lofty Ranges.

A maximum volume of 693.9 GL may be allocated from the **All Purpose Consumptive Pool**. This volume represents the total shares held for all classes within that pool (Classes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8). After CHWN are met (Classes 1, 2 and 5), the next water made available is to Class 3 and Class 8 water entitlement holders according to the rules set out in the Plan.

Some wetlands are directly connected to the River and get water from the dilution and loss component of South Australia's Entitlement. For wetlands that were directly connected and are now managed with a regulator water is allocated from the **Wetland Consumptive Pool**. As this water comes from the dilution and loss component it does not affect water available for consumptive use.

There is a separate **Environment Consumptive Pool** for water that has been recovered from wetland evaporative savings through the Riverine Recovery Program. In the few years when South Australia does not receive its full Entitlement, the water made available to this pool will also come from the dilution and loss component, consistent with the original source of the water savings.

South Australia can also **defer and store** water from its River Murray Entitlement for use in a future year. When required, stored water can be made available for CHWN and private carryover. This means we can plan ahead for a dry period by having a backup water supply in place.

The Plan also explicitly accounts for the **Adelaide Desalination Plant** in the allocation framework, making a difference to how water is shared between all water users during dry years. In dry times, this will allow allocation of an additional 50 GL of River Murray water to holders of class 3 and 8 licences. This equates to an 8 percent increase in irrigator allocations.

The 50GL increase for irrigators is subject to an allowance for Adelaide's growth – the Minister has the option to make an allowance for actual demand growth for Adelaide, but not more than once every four years.



Table 1: Consumptive Pools

Consumptive Pool	Purpose	New Class	Previous Class	Historical Purpose, 2002 Water Allocation Plan
Metropolitan Adelaide	<i>Water supply purposes to Metropolitan Adelaide and associated country areas</i>	Class 6	Class 6	Water supply purposes to Metropolitan Adelaide and associated country areas
All Purpose	<i>All purposes including, but not limited to:</i> - CHWN, stock and domestic, urban supply, country towns, industrial, dairy, irrigation, recreational, environmental and environmental land management in the Lower Murray Reclaimed Irrigation Area - Unlicensed stock and domestic use - Purposes permitted under section 128 authorisations such as road making, firefighting and application of chemicals	Class 1	Class 1	Stock & domestic
		Class 2	Class 2	Urban water use – country towns
		Class 3	Class 3a	Irrigation (non-Qualco)
			Class 3b	Irrigation (Qualco)
		Class 4	Recreation	
Class 7	Environment			
Class 5	Class 5	Industrial & Dairy		
Class 8	Class 8	ELMA		
Wetlands	<i>Management of wetlands within the 1956 flood boundary that can be managed through a wetting and drying regime</i>	Class 9	Class 9	Wetlands
Environmental	<i>Environmental purposes as specified by the Water Act 2007 (Cth)</i>	Class 9	Class 9	Wetlands

Water for the environment

To maintain a healthy river and meet the requirements of the Murray Darling Basin Plan not all of South Australia’s River Murray Entitlement is available for consumptive use. Some Entitlement volume remains in the River to support environmental outcomes, including maintaining the health of the Lower Lakes and Coorong. Other important sources of environmental water including unregulated flows (flows that cannot be regulated in the Basin storages), and entitlements from the *All Purpose, Wetland and Environment Consumptive Pools* that are dedicated for environmental use. Further information on the use of environmental water can be found in the [Managing water for ecological outcomes](#) fact sheet.

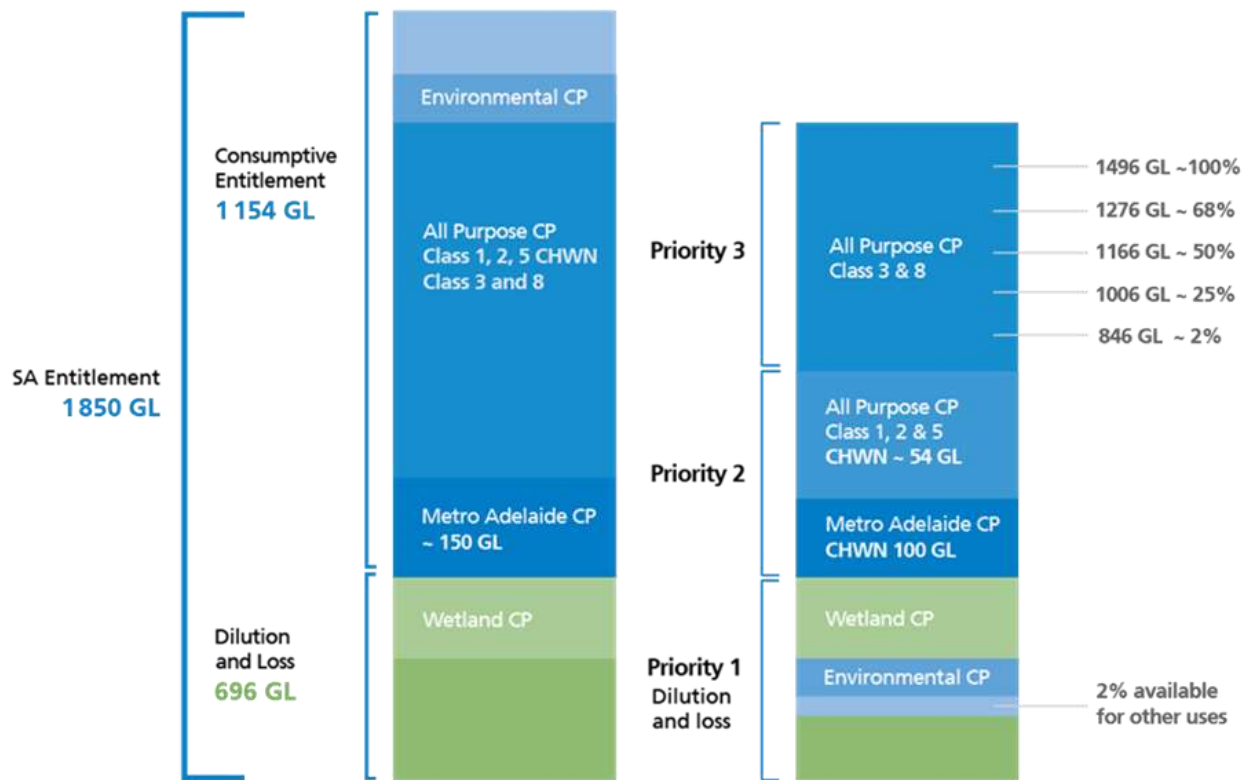
Changes to the water allocation framework

To meet South Australia’s Murray Darling Basin Plan compliance obligations through Sustainable Diversion Limits, provisions have been included to allow the Minister for Environment and Water to consult with stakeholders and to take action, if necessary, to address non-compliance (section 5.3.3 of the Plan). Stakeholders will be consulted to identify potential options to resolve compliance issues. Any actions will seek to minimise adverse impacts for entitlement holders. Further information can be found in the [sustainable diversion limits](#) fact sheet.

Other minor changes have been made for transparency or clarity and do not change the water allocation framework or reliability of existing entitlement holders.



Figure 1 – Water allocation framework and priorities at below Entitlement of 1,850 GL



NB. The volumes and corresponding percentages set out in Figure 1 are displayed as a rough guide and for illustrative purposes only and will vary subject to the volume of Entitlement available, volume of water available in storage, and volumes of water deferred for CHWN and private carryover purposes.

I want to find out more about...

Water allocations and announcements, please visit the DEW website:

<https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/river-murray/water-allocation-and-carryover/water-allocations-and-announcements>

Fact sheets about the **Consumptive Pools** that relate to the River Murray, **Sustainable Diversion Limits** and **how water is managed for ecological outcomes** please refer to the Natural Resources SAMDB website here:

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/rivermurraywap

The Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse:

T: (08) 8463 6877

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Or visit:

www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/rivermurraywap

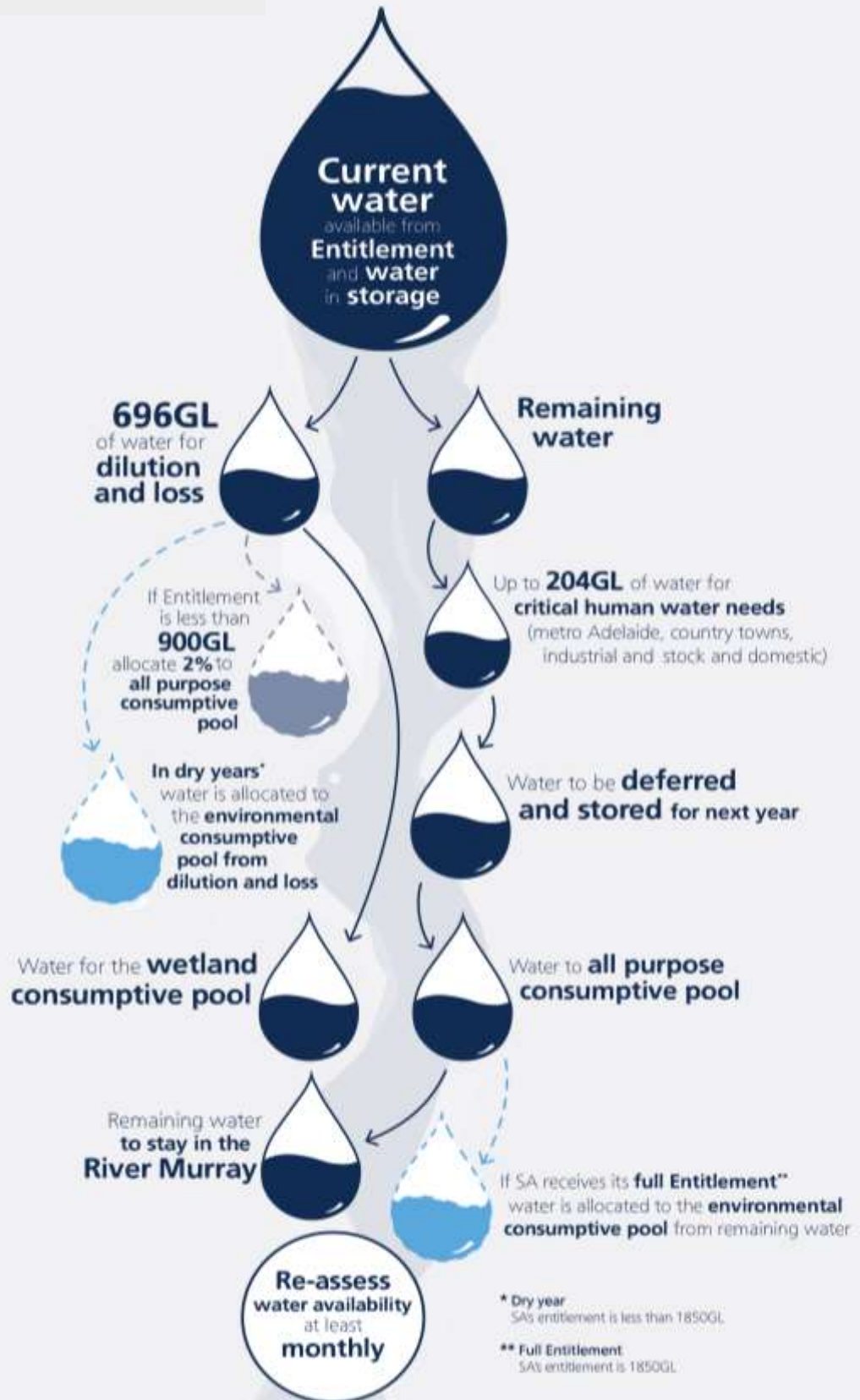


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Figure 2: River Murray water allocation framework



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