

Diamantina-Warburton River System

The Channel Country derived its name from the multi-channelled nature of the rivers, that in their entirety spread across parts of two states and one territory: Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory. The Channel Country rivers are ranked as the most highly variable in the world, flowing toward (but only periodically reaching) Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre, the terminal point in this inwardly draining system.

The South Australian reaches of the Georgina–Diamantina catchment are characterised by iconic rivers, creeks and wetlands, such as Goyder Lagoon, Diamantina and Warburton Rivers, Eyre Creek and Kallakoopah Creek. The catchment has an unregulated flow regime with low water extraction and is a significant example, at a global scale, of a low gradient, intermittent, dryland river characterised by the ‘boom and bust’ dynamics that are characteristic of Australian arid and semi-arid environments. The boom-bust sequence is driven by the inter-annual variability in flow, with the Diamantina River having one of the most variable flow regimes in the world.

The combined waters of the Diamantina and the Georgina rivers fill Goyder Lagoon which drains to Kati Thanda–Lake Eyre via the Warburton River and Kallakoopah Creek.

Permanent waterholes are dryland river refuges sustained by a naturally functioning hydrological regime.



The Lake Eyre Basin contains some of the few remaining naturally functioning, unregulated dryland river systems on earth. The biodiversity values of the Diamantina River critically depend on maintaining this natural hydrological regime.

