

Sharing the River Murray

At a glance:

- > Some parts of the Strategy will be used as Victoria's input to the Commonwealth Government's Basin Plan.
- > The Strategy offers the Northern Region community an important opportunity to be heard.

Some community members have asked – “Will the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy be made irrelevant by the Basin Plan?” The answer is no.

There are two types of proposals in the Draft Strategy:

1. Victoria's decisions

Proposals to improve the way Victoria manages its share of water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin. These proposals are not affected by Commonwealth Government decisions at all. They include:

- > setting aside additional water reserves as insurance against dry years
- > more choice for entitlement-holders to use carryover and trade
- > promoting efficient water use and encouraging sustainable irrigation
- > improving the way we manage rivers and wetlands across the region.

See Chapters 5 to 8 of the Draft Strategy for more information.

2. Victoria's input into Commonwealth decisions

Proposals that seek feedback from the community to inform Victoria's contribution to the Commonwealth Government's Basin Plan. The Commonwealth Government will draft and approve a Basin Plan by 2011. The Commonwealth Minister for Water is the final decision-maker on the contents of the Basin Plan. However, the Strategy can guide regional approaches on:

- > the review of water-sharing agreements
- > revising the cap on surface water diversions
- > setting a cap on groundwater extractions
- > the best way to protect regional communities when changing water trading rules and purchasing water for the environment
- > priorities for environmental water recovery
- > integrating the management of environmental water across the Basin.

See Chapter 1 of the Draft Strategy for more information.



What is the Basin Plan?

The Commonwealth Government will prepare a Basin Plan by 2011. The Plan will come into effect in Victoria in 2019. It will:

- > establish new caps on surface and groundwater use
- > establish Basin-wide environmental objectives
- > establish efficient water trading regimes
- > improve water security for all users of Basin water resources.

What is Victoria doing to protect the River Murray?

Victoria's initiatives will recover 324 GL (billion litres) a year to benefit the River Murray. They include:

- > the 'First Step' of the Living Murray Initiative
- > the Snowy River Water Recovery Project
- > Stage 1 of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP).

Further information

Individuals, organisations and the community are invited to provide formal feedback on the proposals in the Draft Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy by December 12 2008. These will inform the directions in the Final Strategy, due for release in early 2009.

To obtain a copy of the Draft Strategy, or to find out how to make a submission, please call 136 186 or go to www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern.

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