

# Water Allocation Plan

## River Murray Prescribed Watercourse

Allocating South Australia's Entitlement, including during dry conditions



The Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse (the Plan) includes principles to guide the process for making water available for allocation to entitlement holders.

Water available for allocation comes from South Australia's River Murray Entitlement of up to 1850 Gigalitres (GL) per annum under the *Murray-Darling Basin Agreement* (the Agreement).

During dry periods, South Australia's Entitlement may be less than 1,850 GL. In these years, there may not be enough water available to meet the needs of all water users, including the environment. A transparent process for allocation decision making assists all water users in planning and preparing for dry conditions.

The approach to allocating water was developed in collaboration with the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resource Management Board's community-based River Murray Advisory Committee (RMAC) and other key stakeholders. Further community input was provided during the consultation process on the draft 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 is able to be made available for consumptive purposes, including for irrigation and critical human water needs (CHWN).

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.



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## How is water allocated?

Once advised by the MDBA on Entitlement availability, the principles in the Plan guide the process for determining how much water can be made available for allocation from one of four consumptive pools.

While Entitlement availability is the primary driver for allocation decisions, other factors include the volume of water held by South Australia under its storage right, and requirements for CHWN, irrigation and the environment.

The Plan sets out a transparent approach to making water available for allocation and the hierarchy applied when allocations are made. This takes into account economic, social and environmental considerations.

There are two key steps:

1. **Volume made available.** The volume of water that is made available to each consumptive pool or purpose is calculated based on the advised availability of Consumptive Entitlement and the factors described above.
2. **Allocation to entitlement holders.** Water is allocated to licence holders within each consumptive pool, as shown in Figure 1.

The following describe the key steps and considerations in determining the volumes to be made available and the subsequent allocation to entitlement holders.

- **Dilution and loss.** This is essential for meeting conveyance losses and providing salinity dilution between the South Australian border and Wellington.
- **Critical human water needs.** CHWN is the volume of water required to meet core human consumption requirements for those that rely on the River Murray. CHWN are the highest priority after dilution and loss. In South Australia, the All Purpose Consumptive Pool (via classes 1, 2 and 5) and the Metropolitan Adelaide Consumptive Pool provide water for CHWN.

The actual volume of CHWN required in the current year and the next year will be determined following an assessment of metropolitan Adelaide's water resource availability. Up to 204 GL may be allocated from the River Murray to CHWN in South Australia in a given year.

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

If deferred water is made available for CHWN it will be provided to either the Metropolitan Adelaide

Consumptive Pool and /or the All Purpose Consumptive Pool (via classes 1, 2 and 5).

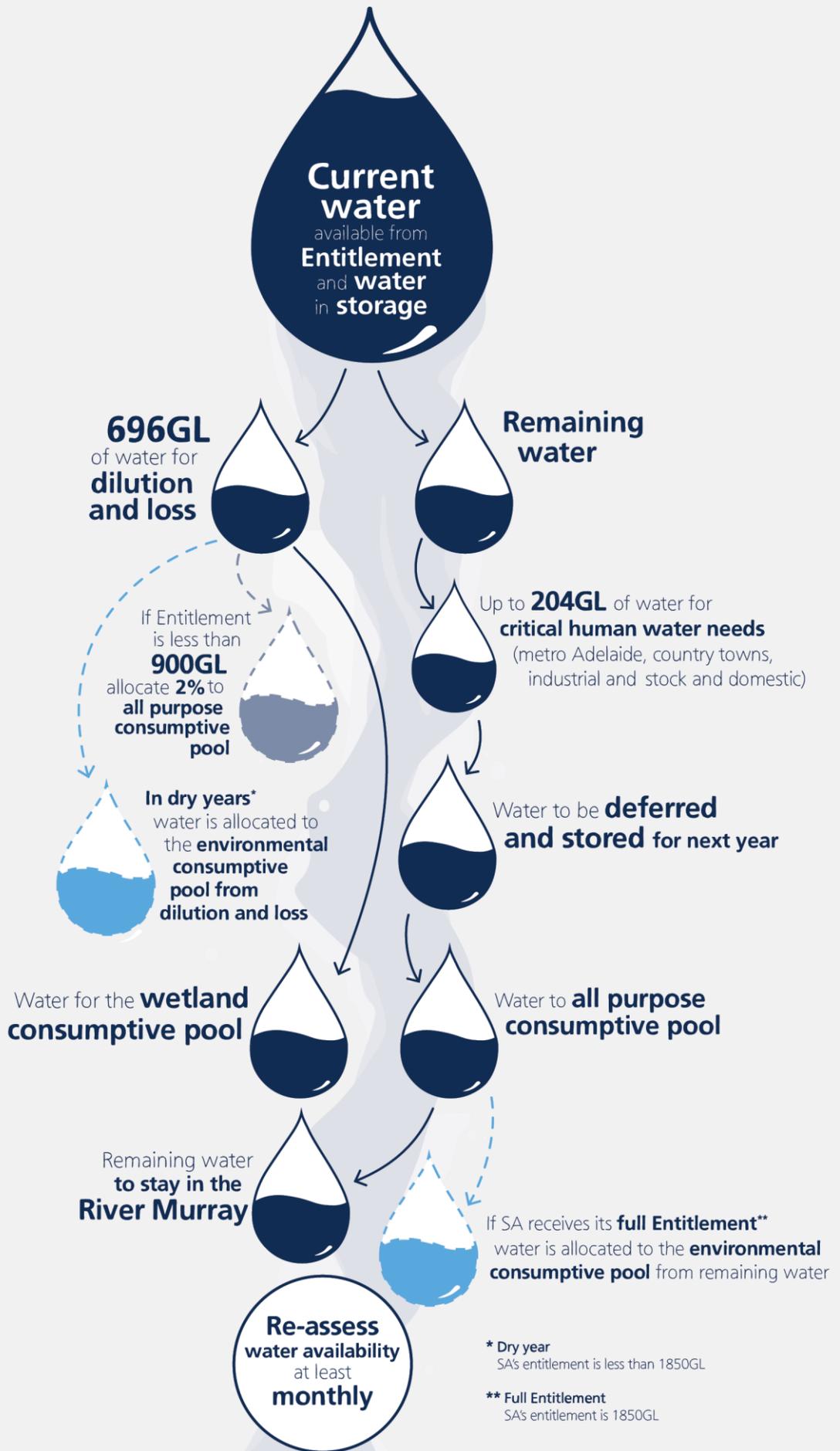
- **All Purpose Consumptive Pool.** A maximum volume of 693.9 GL may be allocated to the All Purpose Consumptive Pool from South Australia's Consumptive Entitlement. This volume represents the total shares held for all classes within that pool (Classes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8).

After the CHWN for Classes 1, 2 and 5 are met, the next water available to South Australia will be made available to Class 3 and Class 8 water access entitlement holders. Water is allocated to Class 3 and 8 according to rules set out in the Plan.

- **Wetlands Consumptive Pool.** The dilution and loss Entitlement provides for losses along the river – this includes losses from pool connected wetlands. Water is therefore provided to the Wetland Consumptive Pool and thereafter allocated to the entitlements used to manage wetlands that are directly connected to the river. This means that water available for other consumptive purposes (irrigation) is not affected by the water requirements of wetlands and vice versa.
- **Environment Consumptive Pool.** Allocations against entitlements that have been recovered as part of wetland evaporative savings via the Riverine Recovery Program may be allocated to the Environment Consumptive Pool. In 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 Entitlement, consistent with the original source of the water savings. When this occurs, the allocations must be used within South Australia.
- **Environmental water.** The Plan aims to use available environmental water to benefit environmental assets. There are many initiatives in place that provide water to the environment, such as The Living Murray Program, and the operations of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. Environmental water is available from a combination of sources including the All Purpose, Wetland and Environment Consumptive Pools, Entitlement that remains in river and unregulated flow.



Figure 1: River Murray Water Allocation Framework



## Does the Plan include requirements for the use of the Adelaide Desalination Plant?

The State Government has decided to explicitly incorporate the Adelaide Desalination Plant (ADP) into how future River Murray water allocations are made.

As a result, the ADP is making a major difference to how water is shared between all users of the SA River Murray in dry years – with 50 GL of available River Murray water to be released to holders of irrigation licences in these years.

This corresponds to an 8 percentage point increase in irrigators' allocations from the Murray.

For example, under the very dry conditions that prevailed at the start of the 2016-17 water year, this policy change would have boosted irrigators' opening allocations from 36 per cent to 44 per cent.

## Changes resulting from consultation

The way water is made available and is allocated for wetlands has changed from the draft Plan released for consultation in November 2014, based on feedback received. The draft Plan prioritised wetland allocations and other non-consumptive purposes last. However, community concerns about this have resulted in more work being undertaken to consider other options for providing water to wetlands and consumptive users in dry periods. The changes mean that water for wetlands can be provided in a dry period without impacting on the water available for consumptive purposes. The changes also better reflect historical arrangements for the accounting of water used by wetlands.

The consultation process showed that a new equilibrium was needed in the way water is shared between all users. The Plan now specifically allows the ADP to be factored into River Murray allocations. This allows the Minister to implement the State Government's decision to reduce how much River Murray water is set aside for SA Water's Adelaide licence in dry years.

Boosting allocations to irrigators during dry times helps protect jobs and support industries in the South Australian Murray-Darling Basin. The extra volume for irrigators will be crucial for meeting the survival needs of permanent plantings during dry years and helps maintain business confidence in the irrigation sector and across the region.

To view the consultation and feedback summary, click [here](#). The new policy represents a fairer balancing of risks between SA Water and other users.

## Is this the final approach to allocation decision making? What happens next?

The information on allocation decision making in this Plan provides additional clarity regarding how allocations will be made in a future dry period.

Further review of the Plan is required to ensure Basin Plan compliance by 2019. This review will be undertaken in collaboration with the community to ensure the framework meets community needs while also meeting South Australia's commitments to the Basin Plan.

### I want to find out more about...

**How the Water Allocation Plan guides allocation decisions**, please phone Natural Resources SAMDB on (08) 8463 6877

**Water allocations and announcements**, please visit the DEWNR website  
[www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/river-murray/water-allocation-and-carryover](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/river-murray/water-allocation-and-carryover)

**The Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse**, please visit  
[www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin](http://www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/samurraydarlingbasin)

