

**GMID Water  
Leadership Group**



**Murray Valley  
Private Diverters**



**Upper Goulburn  
River Catchment  
Association**

**Hon Tanya Pilbersk**

Minister for Water  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House,  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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July 6, 2023

## **Water sharing in South Australia and innovative ideas**

Dear Minister,

At this critical junction in the Murray Darling Basin Plan, it is imperative that every stone is overturned to ensure long-term sustainable outcomes for the Basin's social, economic and environmental needs are achieved. But this requires full disclosure of all information from Basin States on how they share water among different users, including the environment.

The consumption pool in southern NSW, northern Victoria and South Australia has no more water to give. As such, we are concerned about the SA Government's relentless call for more water recovery through buybacks, even though further buybacks from farmers anywhere in the southern connected Basin will put the SA Riverland at as much risk as our irrigation regions upstream.

At the same time as calling for more water to be recovered from farmers, the SA Government has increased demand on the Murray River in its own State by extending pipelines to supply towns and development hundreds of kilometers outside the Murray-Darling Basin. However, we just don't know how the SA Government shares water among its different users, who and where those users are, and the relative actual volumes over years, including HEW and PEW, once water crosses the border and out of MDBA management.

We urge you to request the SA Government to release this information so that all Basin State Governments and southern Basin irrigation communities can better understand the total picture of demand on the Murray River. This will assist in identifying innovative ideas and options to deliver the Basin Plan without further water recovery from farmers.

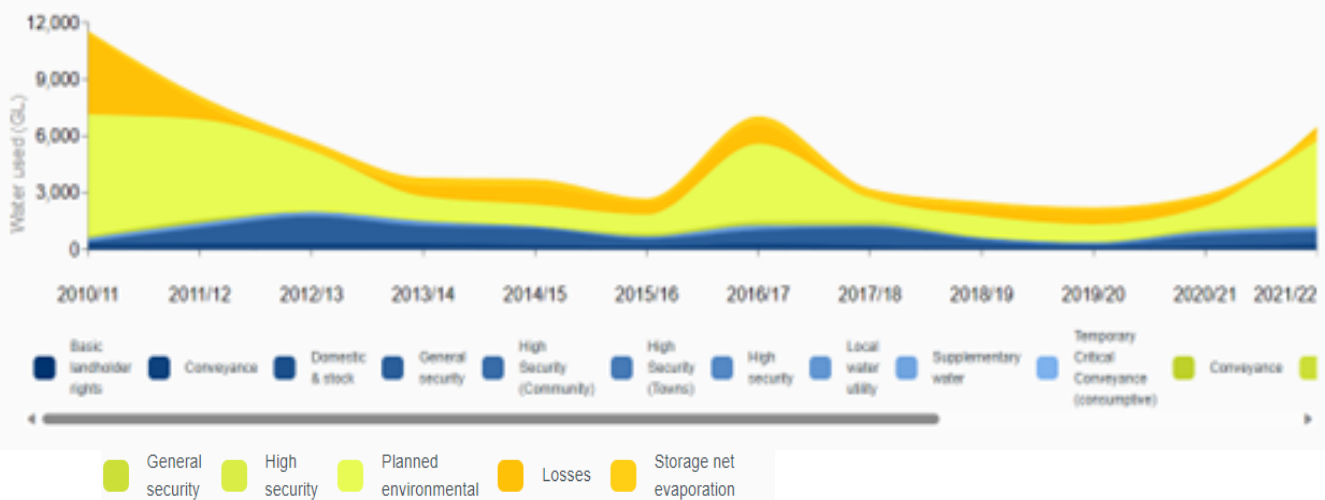
This information ideally would be presented in an easy-to-understand way, similar to the graphic below produced by WaterNSW on its [Water Insights](#) website that clearly shows who gets what water and how much from the NSW share of the Murray River.

## Comparing water usage in prior years

This graph shows the relative proportion of water used for each purpose over 10 years. It is the same information as show in the bar graph above but all 10 years are shown in one graph.

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Further, while we have made a submission to DCCEEW on ideas and options to deliver the Basin Plan without further water recovery from consumptive pool, we would like to highlight some options we believe must be fully explored in South Australia.

- Reduce urban dependence on the Murray River through alternative water supplies such as more desalination, stormwater recycling, aquifer storage.
- Reliance on Adelaide's desalination plant(s) for urban supply during drought rather than increased take from the Murray River.
- Improve the quality and quantity of freshwater directed into the Coorong's southern lagoon from the south-east drainage network, to address its degradation.

This is currently restricted due to high fertiliser and chemical loads due to farming practices surrounding the Coorong. We recommend financial support to allow farmers to:

- Increase soil biology, thereby increasing soil carbon levels, soils with higher levels of carbon filter water before it reaches the aquifer. Increased carbon has the dual benefits of increasing soil water holding

- capacity and structure, resulting in healthier plants that sequester more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.
- Undertake programs to prevent water from leaving the farm which potentially has a chemical or nutrient load.
  - Develop and maintain wetlands to filter runoff before it enters the Coorong.
  - Increase flows to the Southern Coorong by developing and maintaining wetlands on public land to filter water before it is diverted back into the southern Coorong.
- (d) Redivert South-East Drains to the Southern Coorong:
- Returning water to the southern Coorong which is currently sent out to sea via the South East Drains could account for thousands of gigalitres a year of flows into the Coorong.
- (e) Lock Zero - [Here](#)
- (f) Review the Basin Plan 1.0 requirement to increase the average flows of 4000GL per annum out the Murray Mouth by an additional 2000GL (on rolling average).
- (g) Lower Lakes infrastructure: While irrigation infrastructure is being modernised upstream, we are concerned that the same investments have not been made at the end of the system. Modernising the barrages and investigating any other infrastructure could help us ensure efficient management of fresh water.

Recent [scientific research](#) exposes the failure of the Basin Plan 1.0 model to account for the counteracting force of the southern ocean, and demonstrates that this omission means an additional 2000GL cannot meet the Basin Plan KPI to keep the Murray mouth open in 95 out of 100 years without dredging. This research in fact demonstrates why no amount of additional water over the barrages will deliver this KPI.

Further, this 2000 GL is not required to export salt through the mouth, given the extensive salt interception schemes upstream in Victoria and NSW to prevent the mobilization of salt in the landscape and keep it out of rivers.

For the health of the entire Murray-Darling Basin, all governments and communities need to be confident the SA Government is undertaking every measure to also reduce its dependency on the Murray River and water from its storages.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,  
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**On behalf of**  
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Speak Up Campaign  
Upper Goulburn River Catchment  
Association  
Murray Valley Private Diverters  
Murray Regional Strategy Group  
Murray River Action Group