



Australian Government



The Living Murray

FACT SHEET: THE LIVING MURRAY PROGRAM

THE LIVING MURRAY IS AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST AND MOST SIGNIFICANT RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM

The Living Murray involves the Australian Government (through the Murray-Darling Basin Authority) and all the states that make up the Murray-Darling Basin. Works on the ground and environmental watering are managed by a partnership of state government departments and catchment management authorities.

By returning water to the environment, and by building infrastructure such as regulators, weirs and fishways, The Living Murray is helping to ensure a healthy, working Murray River into the future.

ICON SITES

The Living Murray focuses on maintaining the health of six icon sites along the river, chosen for their environmental, cultural and international significance.

The icon sites are:

- Barmah-Millewa Forest
- Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Forest
- Hattah Lakes
- Chowilla Floodplain and Lindsay-Wallpolla Islands
- The Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth
- River Murray Channel



WATER RECOVERY

Permanent, cost-effective recovery of water for the environment is an important step forward in the process of returning the Murray to a healthy working river.

The 'first step' decision of The Living Murray was to recover 500 gigalitres for return to the environment and to use this water to achieve environmental objectives at the icon sites. This was termed the 'first step' as it was recognised that it was only the first step towards restoring the Murray River to better health.

Each state, including Victoria, has a target amount of water to be recovered by June 2009. In Victoria this water is recovered through a variety of measures including efficiencies created through water infrastructure upgrades and regulatory reform.

RETURNING WATER TO RIVERS

The Murray River's floodplains are currently suffering from the combined impact of water diversion, river regulation and record low inflows. This combination has caused a serious decline in the condition of floodplain ecosystems along the length of the river.

The Living Murray is delivering recovered water to icon sites to protect and preserve habitat for plants and animals, including iconic river red gums, birds, frogs, turtles and fish. Some of these species may eventually face extinction if no action is taken.

Environmental water is subject to the same rules and limitations as equivalent licenses held by irrigators.

Decisions regarding the use of environmental water are based on scientific information about where it is most needed and where the best results can be achieved.

ENGINEERING SOLUTIONS TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Major engineering works at The Living Murray's icon sites will help deliver water to forests and wetlands, maintaining functioning floodplain communities and providing critical drought refuge for native plants and animals. Without these works the health of the icon sites will continue to decline.

Engineering works include built infrastructure such as regulators (which have gates that can be opened and closed to allow flooding and drying of wetlands), channels, fishways and levee banks.

The infrastructure works are the result of five years of careful planning and modelling and will ensure the most efficient delivery of the environmental water that is available.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

A key part of The Living Murray is to find a balance between social, cultural and environmental needs, as well as national interests, to ensure there is equity in the way that environmental water is delivered.

A number of community-based committees, including a basin-wide community reference group, and consultation reference groups at each icon site ensure that a broad range of views are sought on the implementation of The Living Murray.

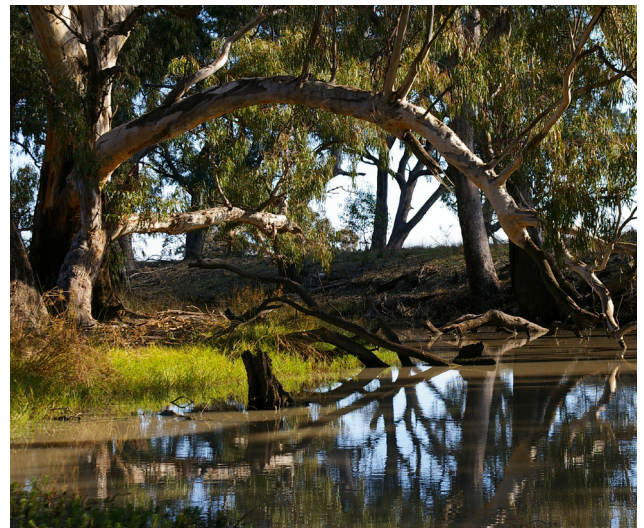
INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIPS

The Living Murray recognises Indigenous people's spiritual and cultural connection to their country, and their aspirations to be actively involved in managing the environment.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment and Victorian catchment management authorities employ Indigenous Facilitators at each of the Victorian icon sites to facilitate Indigenous communities' active involvement in The Living Murray.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information on the results The Living Murray program, visit the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website: www.mdba.gov.au



The Living Murray program aims to maintain the health of important areas of the Murray River. Photo: Keith Ward



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