



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities



ENVIRONMENTAL WATERING

Why do we need healthy rivers?

Healthy rivers are vital to the health and survival of many plant and animal species as well as to farming communities, towns and major cities.

People use water from Australia's rivers and wetlands for activities like watering crops, drinking, washing, and flushing toilets. But, sometimes, we take out too much water and the rivers become unhealthy.

Australia is a country that has many dry areas and often lots of droughts. If we take too much water out of the rivers, they start to dry up. When rivers stop flowing and gradually become drier, the water can become unhealthy for humans to use. Many fish, birds, animals and plants are also affected as they lose the food, shelter and clean water provided by the river.

What can we do to help keep our rivers healthy?

Just like you need blood flowing through your body to keep you healthy, rivers need some water flowing through them. When there is not enough rain, we can help the rivers stay healthy by returning water to waterways that have become too dry.

To help keep the rivers healthy, the Australian Government is buying water from farmers who want to sell their water and putting it back into the rivers in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The water the government buys is called environmental water.

Environmental water is released from dams into rivers and wetlands. This means that birds, fish, animals and plants can continue to live in and around the rivers and the water stays clean and fresh for people to use.

Did you know?

So far, the Australian Government has put back enough water into our rivers to fill 80 000 swimming pools or 200 billion milk cartons. Now that's a lot of water!

Where has the environmental water gone?

Environmental water is going to rivers and wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Murray-Darling Basin is a network of rivers across Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Three million Australians use water from the Murray-Darling Basin so it is very important that the Basin's rivers stay healthy. This water is often used help to produce food that is distributed across the whole country.

Water has been returned to places like Yanga National Park in New South Wales, Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes in Victoria and Lake Albert in South Australia. Both Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes and Lake Albert are part of internationally important wetlands. Waterbirds, frogs, insects, river red gum trees, and many other plants and animals live and breed in these wetlands.

