



Australian Government



Murray-Darling
Basin
Authority



Corporate Plan

2024–25



Covering the reporting period 2024–25 to 2027–28

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Contact details

Postal address

Murray–Darling Basin Authority
GPO Box 1801
Ngunnawal Country, Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: 1800 230 067

Email: engagement@mdba.gov.au

Website: mdba.gov.au

For requests and inquiries about this corporate plan contact:

Executive Director,
Business Services
MDBA
GPO Box 1801
Ngunnawal Country, Canberra ACT 2601

Cover: Lachlan River, Wiradjuri Country, Cowra, New South Wales

Acknowledgement of First Nations



The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) offers respect to the Traditional Owners of Country and other First Nations peoples living within the Murray–Darling Basin. We pay respect to Elders past and present and to future leaders.

First Nations peoples have been looking after Country in sophisticated ways since time immemorial and continue to do so. The MDBA acknowledges their enduring deep Cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to Country.

We have heard many First Nations peoples express that when Country is not healthy, the people are unwell, and the ability to practice Culture and look after Country is impacted.

This includes being able to swim in the local waterways and harvest traditional foods and resources. First Nations people know waterways as living entities and live by the principle that everything is connected.

The continued separation of land, water and people, through colonisation, has ongoing impacts to First Nations peoples. It impacts their ability to connect, take care of and protect Country in accordance with their traditions, lore and Cultural obligations.

First Nations people in the Basin have been intentionally excluded from decision-making processes about water. Water management laws have contributed to disparity and dispossession, as they were developed without recognising First Nations sovereignty. We acknowledge that this causes distress.

The Authority understands the need for recognition of Traditional Owner knowledge and Cultural values in natural resource management associated with the Basin.

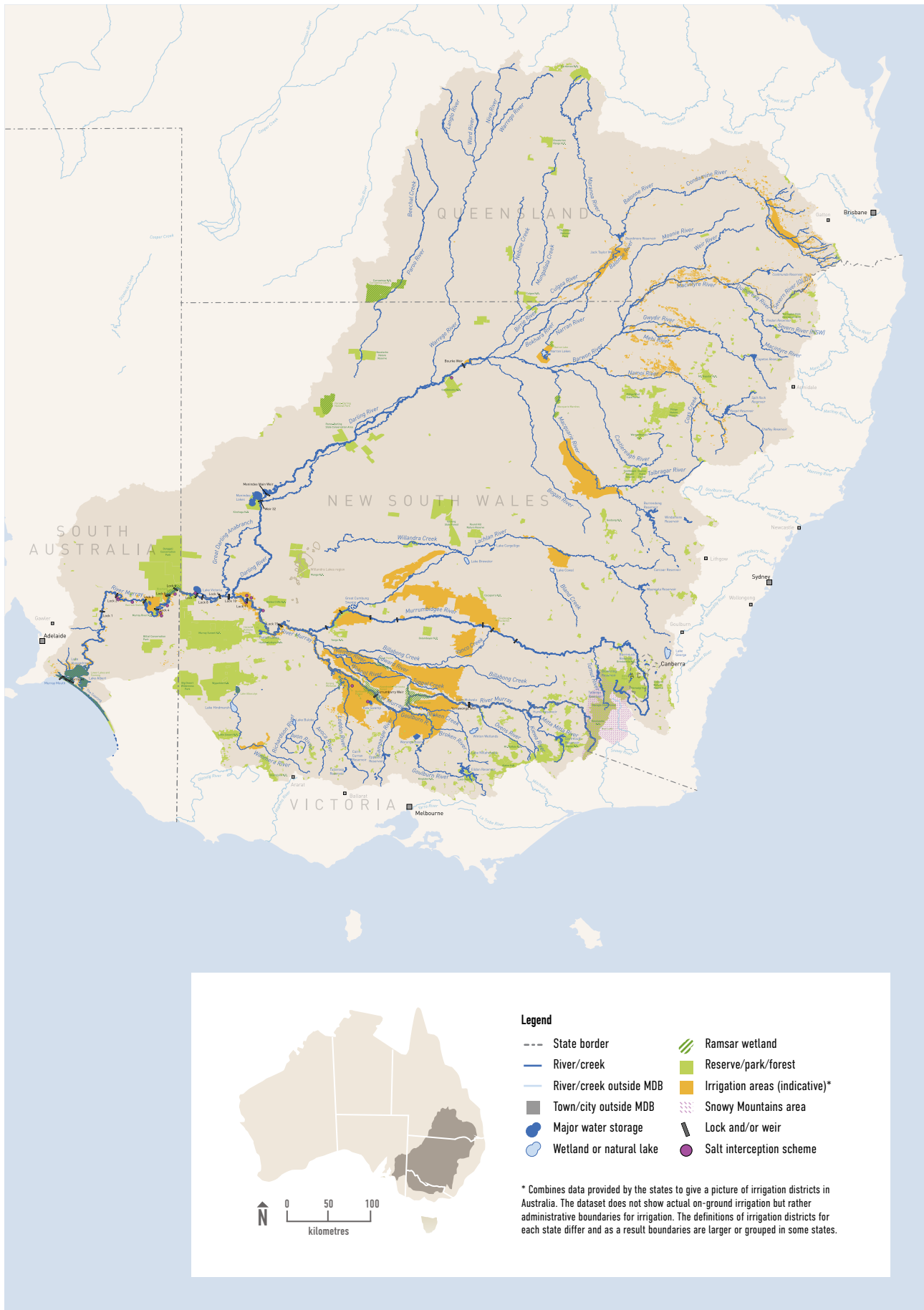


Figure 1 Map of the Murray–Darling Basin

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Statement from the Accountable Authority

I, Andrew McConville, as the Accountable Authority of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the MDBA), present the MDBA Corporate Plan 2024–25, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*, section 213A of the *Water Act 2007*, and clause 34 of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement.

The plan covers the periods 2024–25 to 2027–28.

Mr Andrew McConville
Chief Executive

Message from the Chief Executive

Welcome to the Murray–Darling Basin Authority Corporate Plan for 2024–25



It is with privilege and determination that I present our corporate plan for 2024–25, as the MDBA continues to manage and protect Australia’s largest and most complex river system to deliver on our purpose – *Rivers*, for generations.

Reforms passed under the *Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Act 2023* provided Basin governments with more time to implement key elements of the Basin Plan and resulted in a new sequence of milestones for the MDBA through the 4-year horizon of this Corporate Plan. Of particular significance is the new responsibility for delivering a Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap in 2024 and the extended delivery of sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM)

projects, with reconciliation now scheduled to take place in December 2026. The legislation also outlined the Government’s recommitment to delivering the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program and amending the Basin Plan to ensure it acknowledges and adequately defines First Nations People’s connection, history, and water needs.

Our work progressing to the 2026 Basin Plan Review accelerates this year with deep conversations on our Early Insights Paper to share our current thinking on some of the Basin’s most complex challenges. This year will also see the release of the 2025 Basin Plan Evaluation and several key science inputs to the Basin Plan Review. These are part of our commitment to share knowledge and what we have learned.

The Basin is home to millions of people, all with different views and experiences, but all relying on water from the 23 rivers that feed life into the environmental sites, wetlands, farms, and towns that span more than one million square kilometres. We take very seriously our responsibility to manage and safeguard those resources.

With energy and courage, we will work with Basin governments as they progress full implementation of the Basin Plan, including the pursuit of water recovery to meet remaining targets, finalising water

resource plans, and progressing the implementation of projects to relax system constraints. Full implementation of the Basin Plan puts the Basin and all who rely upon it in the best position possible to meet the challenges ahead. The consequences of not having rivers for generations are significant and this challenge requires all of us to find a way to a sustainable future, together.

In 2024 we will work collaboratively and constructively with Basin governments to develop the Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap. This Australian Government funded initiative will identify opportunities for greater coordination across projects to help resolve issues inhibiting delivery and set forth actions to accelerate constraints measures by the end of 2026. It will include recommendations to improve cross border co-ordination and collaboration on key areas including flow rates, stakeholder negotiations, regulatory approvals and third-party risks.

Through our engagement with jurisdictions and stakeholder consultation, we remain steadfast in our commitment to improve flows to floodplains and achieve environmental and community outcomes in true partnership with impacted landholders, First Nations people, and the community.

We will continue to provide vital input and advice as new SDLAM projects are brought forward between now and 30 June 2025, supporting states to work through amendments to existing projects while moving towards the reconciliation deadline of 30 June 2026. Annual reporting of progress provides transparency, keeping everyone focused on delivering projects. At the end of 2026 the Authority will provide a reconciliation of the extent to which the package of measures has contributed to the originally intended target.

Water resource plans are critical. They give effect to sustainable diversion limits, enable compliance through consistency, and are a key accountability step in ensuring Basin state water management arrangements are consistent with the Basin Plan. With great progress made in 2023–24, we continue to work through the remaining four plans with New South Wales as a priority.

Drawing on our Reconciliation Action Plan, strengthening our connections with First Nations remains central with a focus on respecting their knowledge and Cultural connection to land and water. As we prepare for the Basin Plan Review, the Authority will embrace the opportunity we have to contribute to better outcomes for First Nations communities, and to enhance the way we involve First Nations people in water management decisions. Recent funding provisions will enable the update and implementation of the MDBA's Indigenous Cultural

Intellectual Property (ICIP) policy to ensure that free, prior, and informed consent underpins our relationships with First Nations peoples. We will focus our energy to forge new partnerships and deepen existing ones with First Nations peoples. In the year ahead the MDBA will welcome the appointment of a second Indigenous Authority Member, providing better representation of First Nations perspectives in water management decisions.

We continue to adaptively manage the River Murray system. This includes regularly reviewing the climate and rainfall outlooks, working closely with states and environmental water holders to understand their demands and directing daily releases from storages so we have the right flows in the river at the right time.

Our operations are guided by the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and the *Objectives and Outcomes for River Operations in the River Murray System*. We will continue to publish insights to our forecasts and system planning through our Annual Operating Outlook.

Working with Basin states, we will continue steps to improve and modernise our river operating systems and process, including implementing recommendations of the 2022–23 Flood Review. As part of the \$2.6 million Modernising Murray River Systems initiative, we are embarking on a study to better understand the resilience of the River Murray system's assets and rules including how they perform in dry times.

The Water Delivery Optimisation Program will be advanced in 2024–25 as the MDBA continues its efforts to manage the River Murray system and the risk of delivery constraints, particularly through the Barmah–Millewa Reach. We will work with Basin states, First Nations people and the broader community on how we are assessing outcomes in an open and transparent way.

We are starting to wrap up the Murray–Darling Water and Environment Research Program (MD–WERP). The Australian Government's investment to strengthen scientific knowledge of the Murray–Darling Basin will continue to address Basin Plan objectives throughout the Review. A final showcase is scheduled for 2025, replacing the MD–WERP Symposium.

As we implement the Basin Plan, we must also look at how we can meet future challenges. Investing in our key science programs is a fundamental way we can continue to refine ways of working. Science and modelling continue to be developed to consider how future management of the Basin occurs under a range of hydroclimate scenarios. Critical science and modelling inputs from the reinstated Sustainable Rivers Audit and the updated Sustainable Yields program will inform the Review by tracking and reporting on the health of the Basin rivers and providing an indication of how much water may be available in the future.

We are modernising and integrating the various modelling platforms across the Basin, working with jurisdictions to improve our collective knowledge and capacity to better manage Basin resources. Our progress with the second phase of the Integrated River Modelling Uplift Program sees us remaining on time and within budget, with preparations for Phase three well under way.

Being in community is vital to delivering the building blocks of an evolved Basin Plan and to managing the River Murray system and so we are bringing energy to finding new ways of engagement. Deep thinking and collaboration across states, with academics and community, takes time. This is why we have commenced preparations for the 2026 Basin Plan Review now and will be developing a strategy for the MDBA to 2030.

Building on the success of the Basin Leadership Summit in April 2024, we have begun to establish and open new ways of supporting conversations between people from across the Basin with different interests, perspectives, and knowledge. In preparing for the 2026 Basin Plan Review, the Authority is steadfast in its commitment to listen, learn and communicate not just the decisions, but what has informed these.

We know we get better outcomes when we have the courage to facilitate tough conversations. In 2024–25 we will increase our presence in the regions to allow us to consult more broadly across Basin communities. This includes engagement with experts and natural resource managers to test our thinking and share our evidence base.

An integrated approach is crucial if we are to meet the grand challenge of sustainable communities, environments, and rivers for generations. We know not everyone will agree with our recommendations, but the process will have been fair.

Being in community, bringing energy and being courageous are our MDBA values. These values drive us and call us forward to achieve our purpose through running the River Murray and the full implementation of the Basin Plan while progressing critical inputs to the Basin Plan Review. These are not consecutive journeys where one set of footprints end, and another set begins. Instead, we see the footprints of operations, implementation, and the Basin Plan Review tracking side by side. Journeys interwoven to guide both the immediate and long-term paths ahead.

As we take these steps over the forward years, I urge you to walk with us, to challenge us and help us – to inspire everyone in achieving *Rivers*, for generations.



Mr Andrew McConville
Chief Executive

26 August 2024

The Murray–Darling Basin is Australia’s largest and most complex river system

- Spans 4 states and 1 territory
- Covers an area of more than a million square kilometres
- 22 catchments
- Home to 2.4 million people



The Basin supports 8,400 irrigated agriculture businesses.



Farmers use water to produce the crops that feed Australians and help our economy.



Agriculture in the Basin contributes \$30 billion to Australia’s economy.



Swimming, fishing, boating and other recreational water activities are only possible in clean, safe water.



First Nations people’s connection to Country relies on water to maintain traditional practices.



The plants and animals that live in the Basin’s unique ecosystems depend on water to survive.



Towns and rural communities rely on a healthy river system.



More than 100 ecological sites of international and national significance.

Figure 2 Why the Murray–Darling Basin is important

About us



Our purpose

Rivers, for generations



Our roles

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) is an independent government agency. In partnership with Basin governments, we manage the Murray–Darling Basin’s water resources in the national interest.

We use a whole-of-Basin approach to the sustainable use of the Basin’s water resources. We develop, implement, and review the Basin Plan, which focuses on the wellbeing and resilience of the Basin’s river systems, its people and places.

The Water Act 2007 (the Water Act) sets out our role in developing and implementing the Basin Plan and performing functions under the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement (the MDB Agreement).

We deliver our functions under the MDB Agreement with and on behalf of the contracting governments – the Australian Government and the governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory.

The MDB Agreement establishes the MDBA’s function to direct river operations within the River Murray System. *The Objectives and Outcomes for River Operations in the River Murray System*, approved by the Basin Official Committee, is based around five themes:

- Water storage, delivery and accounting
- River Murray Operations (RMO) assets
- People and communities
- Environment
- Information and communication.

Our essential roles are to:

- provide expertise and knowledge on complex water matters
- drive and facilitate transparent science and analysis
- manage and modernise the River Murray System
- build relationships and communicate authentically to foster a shared understanding of Basin values and perspectives
- meet our responsibilities under the MDB Agreement, the Water Act, and the Basin Plan.



Our values

Our values and principles underpin everything we do. We uphold the Australian Public Service (APS) Values of stewardship, being impartial, committed to service, accountable, respectful and ethical.

Because of our unique context, we are also guided by our MDBA values, shown in Figure 4.

Our values describe how we see ourselves at our best and most purposeful – representing the best of us and how we aspire to be.

Figure 4 MDBA values



- Being in **COMMUNITY**

Understanding, listening, connecting, strengthening and sustaining relationships.

‘Being in Community’ is about more than physical location – it is how we are when all feel recognised, valued, seen and heard. It’s something we seek with First Nations, government, each other and the many diverse and unique Basin communities with whom we interact.

It’s about trust, openness and empathy, encouraging and giving voice to diverse views and perspectives. Being ‘in Community’ is critical for creativity and collaboration.



- Being **COURAGEOUS**

Speaking up, articulating what we do, standing up for our beliefs, voicing concerns and taking ownership.

‘Being Courageous’ allows us to explore and push boundaries, face into trade-offs and make bold choices and decisions. It helps us take risks, seek and give open and honest feedback without fear of failure or of being judged.

Accepting we won’t always get it right and being confident in our purpose, courage helps us clearly communicate our ideas and scientific insights without regard to popularity.



- Bringing **ENERGY**

Strengthening, focusing, empowering and enlivening us to develop and learn new and ever more effective methods, skills and approaches to our work.

‘Bringing Energy’ is critical to what we do day to day. It helps us navigate challenges and channel insight and ideas where they are needed most. It motivates us and animates our thinking.



Our ambition

Our ambition is to bring together what's needed in water management to help achieve a healthy working Basin for the benefit of generations of Australians.

We have developed a set of broad intentions that will show we are delivering on our purpose. Our ambition is to meet these intentions through clear indicators. The intentions are:

- a resilient river system flowing and functioning through the extremes of Australia's evolving climate
- a powerful and continually growing body of knowledge that underpins sound policy and decision making
- collaborative relationships and integration at federal level, between states and between communities, delivering a resilient Basin across states
- confident, optimistic communities who understand what's needed for a sustainable River where 'every drop counts'
- water security for towns and communities, and certainty for industry
- First Nations perspectives in decision making which also delivers Cultural water
- a healthy, sustainable environment where plants, birds, fish and other animals thrive.

Together, our purpose, values, ambition, plans and story represent our way, the MDBA way.

Our regulatory functions

The MDBA's regulatory functions sit within a Basin-wide framework for water management (the Basin Plan). They include:

- Implementing and reviewing the Basin Plan as the primary regulatory framework for managing the water resources of the Murray–Darling Basin including the extent to which the Basin Plan recognises and protects the interests of Indigenous people.
- Monitoring, reporting and evaluation, including reporting for Schedule 12 of the Basin Plan.
- Developing and assessing proposed water resource plans (WRPs) and amendments to accredited water resource plans, including establishing methods that ensure sustainable diversion limits are achieved.
- Developing and reviewing a Basin-wide Environmental Water Strategy.
- Operation and reconciliation of the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism.
- Sustainable diversion limit accounting, including updates to baseline diversion limit estimates and water accounting reporting.

In undertaking these functions, we apply three principles to guide our work: continuous improvement and building trust, risk-based and data driven, and collaboration and engagement.

The MDBA will provide stewardship that supports fit-for-purpose regulatory frameworks across the Murray–Darling Basin and adopt a whole-of-system approach across the regulatory lifecycle.

In 2024–25 we will formalise our Statement of Expectations and Statement of Intent to ensure transparency, accountability, and community confidence in our regulatory functions, and publish these on our website.

Figure 3 The Murray–Darling Basin makes many contributions to Australia





Our key activities in 2024–25

The MDBA has two key activities:

1. Drive the successful implementation of the Basin Plan

Objectives:

- Fully implement the Basin Plan.
- Review and refine the Basin Plan.

2. Efficiently and effectively operate the River Murray System for Basin governments

Objectives:

- Run the River Murray System.
- Reform and optimise management of the River Murray System.

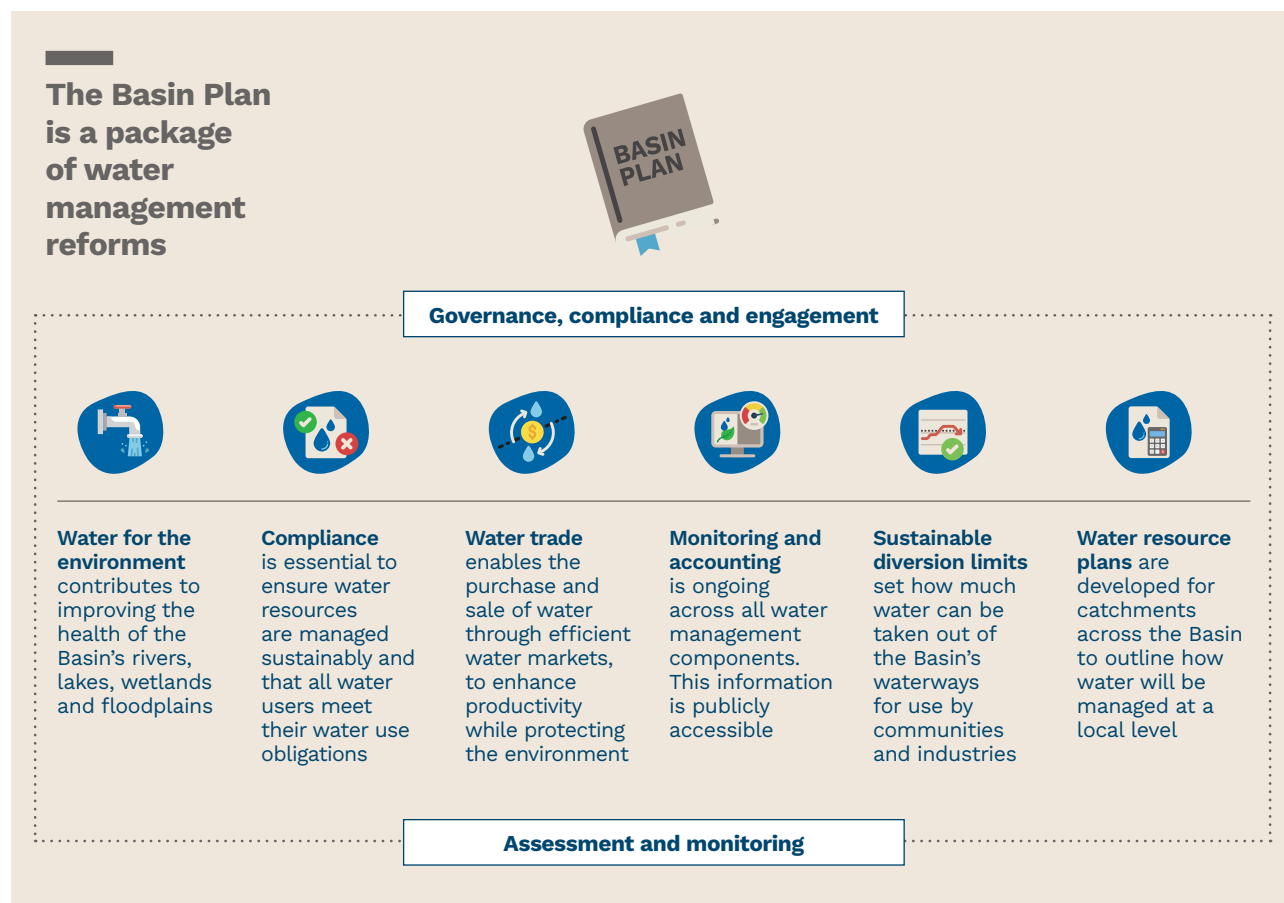
As we progress through our work over the coming years, particularly the Basin Plan Review, we expect that our objectives, KPIs and associated measures will evolve. This work is beginning now and an update to our corporate planning is scheduled for early 2025.


Key activity 1 Implementing the Basin Plan

The Murray–Darling Basin Plan was legislated in 2012 to ensure a coordinated approach to water management across the Basin states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

The aim of the Basin Plan is to restore the health of the Basin and ensure that water resources are shared sustainably for all purposes, including the environment. Figure 5 shows the six key elements of the Basin Plan.

Figure 5 Key elements of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan





Water resource plans are developed by Basin state governments to set out how they will manage their share of water. They are essential building blocks of the Basin Plan.

Under the original legislation, most features of the Basin Plan were required to be implemented by 2024, but the *Restoring our Rivers Act 2023* has provided more time to meet remaining water recovery targets and also extended the time for implementation of the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM). See *Basin governance and assurance* on page 24.

To implement the Basin Plan we work with a range of Australian Government and state government partners, as well as with industry, environmental, community and First Nations people.

Water resource plans are developed by Basin state governments to set out how they will manage their share of water. They are essential building blocks of the Basin Plan.

Water modelling is an important part of water management, allowing us to predict the effects of changing conditions on water flows, water quality and ecosystems. The MDBA has collaborated with Basin states through the Integrated River Modelling Uplift (IRMU) Program to integrate all of the Basin state and MDBA river models on a contemporary, Cloud-based whole of Basin modelling platform. The modelling programs are continually being improved through technological advances and access to new data. Read more about the IRMU on page 31.

Basin Plan Review

The Basin Plan is undergoing its first major review, due for completion by late 2026. This provides an opportunity to review the settings of the Basin Plan in light of the 2025 Basin Plan Evaluation (what has worked, what hasn't worked, what could be better), and decide whether any changes are needed to ensure our rivers remain sustainable over coming years, taking into account climate change, new information and local knowledge.

The timeline for the Basin Plan Review is shown in Figure 6.

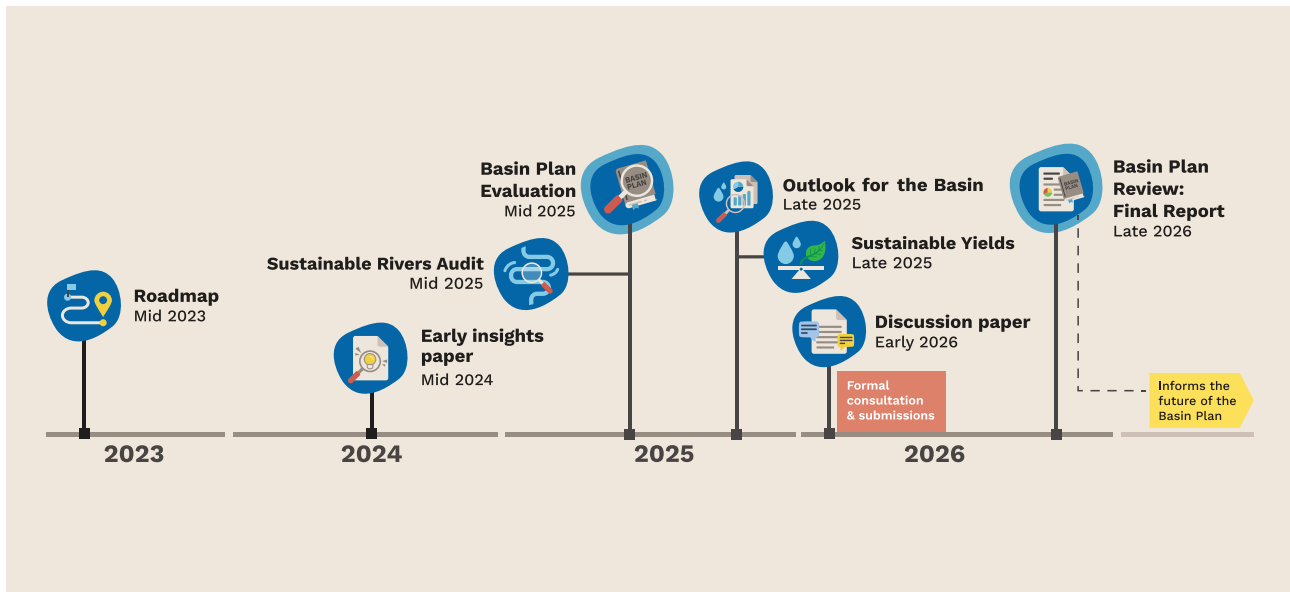
The MDBA released the Early Insights Paper in June 2024, which shared our thinking on some of the Basin's biggest and most complex challenges. It sets out the areas of focus when the Basin Plan was developed, what we've learned since then, and the issues to be addressed as we strive to get better outcomes from the Basin Plan.

There are five areas of challenge identified in the Early Insights Paper:

1. Assessing the Basin Plan's environmental outcomes.
2. Preparing for a range of plausible climate futures.
3. Moving beyond 'just add water'.
4. Managing the northern Basin.
5. Building on, and simplifying the Basin Plan.

Through building understanding of the key challenges, the Paper will allow more effective consultation with all stakeholders.

Figure 6 Basin Plan Review timeline to 2026



Key activity 2 Operating the River Murray

The MDBA operates the River Murray system up to the South Australian border. This includes the waterways, storages, weirs and locks of the River Murray in the southern Basin and coordinates operation of the salt interception schemes.

We calculate how the available water is shared between the Basin states and how much water needs

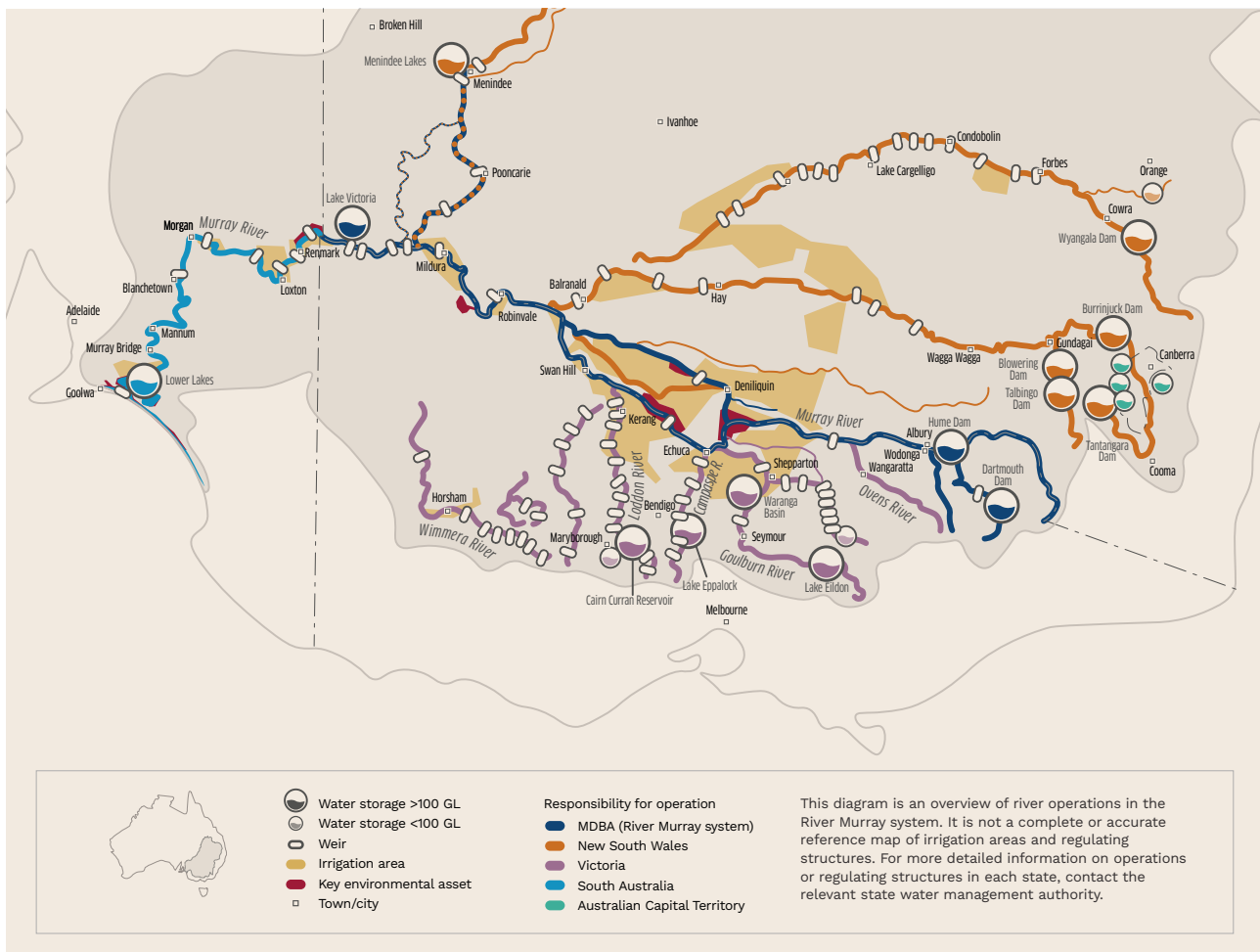
to be released from storages to supply the system including environmental requirements. In addition, we monitor water quality and operate the systems with regard to water quality targets.

The Murray–Darling Basin Agreement sets out our responsibilities for operating the River Murray System. It provides us with rules so we can meet specific objectives and outcomes that relate to the sustainable use of the system’s water resources. We are audited against these objectives and outcomes every year.

Figure 7 shows the parts of the River Murray for which the MDBA has responsibility.

Basin governments and the Australian Government are all signatories to the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement. They contribute funding to the joint management of the River Murray based on each state’s level of water use. The Joint Venture Improvement Project will uplift the transparency, prudence and efficiency of these funding and management arrangements.

Figure 7 Overview of the River Murray system



Operating context

Governance frameworks

The MDBA is a statutory authority, established under the *Water Act 2007* (Cth) (the *Water Act*). The *Water Act* sets out the role of the MDBA in implementing the Basin Plan and performing functions under the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement (Schedule 1 of the *Water Act*), including operating the River Murray on behalf of the Basin governments.

The Authority board is established in accordance with sections 177 and 178 of the *Water Act*.

The Authority takes advice on Basin-wide strategy, policy and planning from the MDBA, and works collaboratively with the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and Basin jurisdictions.

The Authority also receives advice from Basin communities, industry, environmental groups and other organisations to secure Basin water resources.



Figure 8 shows the broader governance framework in which we operate. The MDBA reports to the Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, and is part of the portfolio of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

We work within a legislative framework supplemented by various state and territory government agreements overseen by a robust governance structure.

The Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council comprises Ministers responsible for water from the Australian Government and each of the five Basin jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory) and has policy and decision-making roles for:

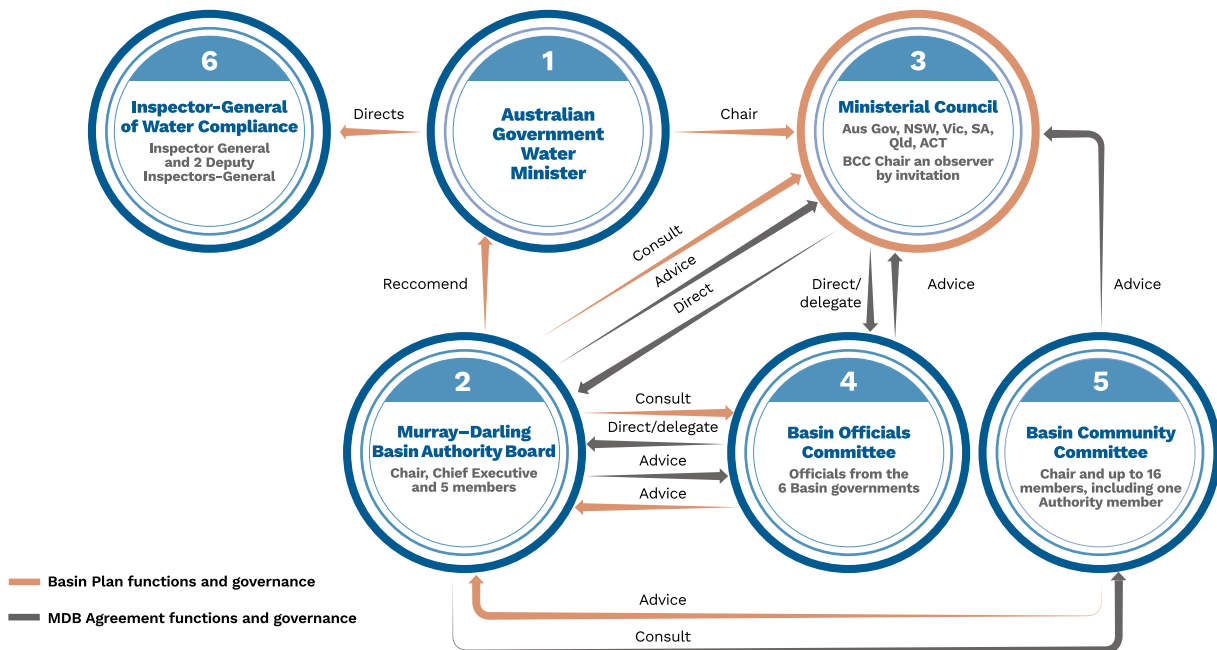
- state water shares, where appropriate
- funding and delivery of natural resource management programs

- issues relating to critical human needs as provided for in the Water Act.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority Board prepares an annual work plan and associated input into the Corporate Plan for approval by the Ministerial Council, which includes the MDBA’s functions under the MDB Agreement.

There is more about the Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council on the [MDBA website](#).

Figure 8 MDBA governance arrangements

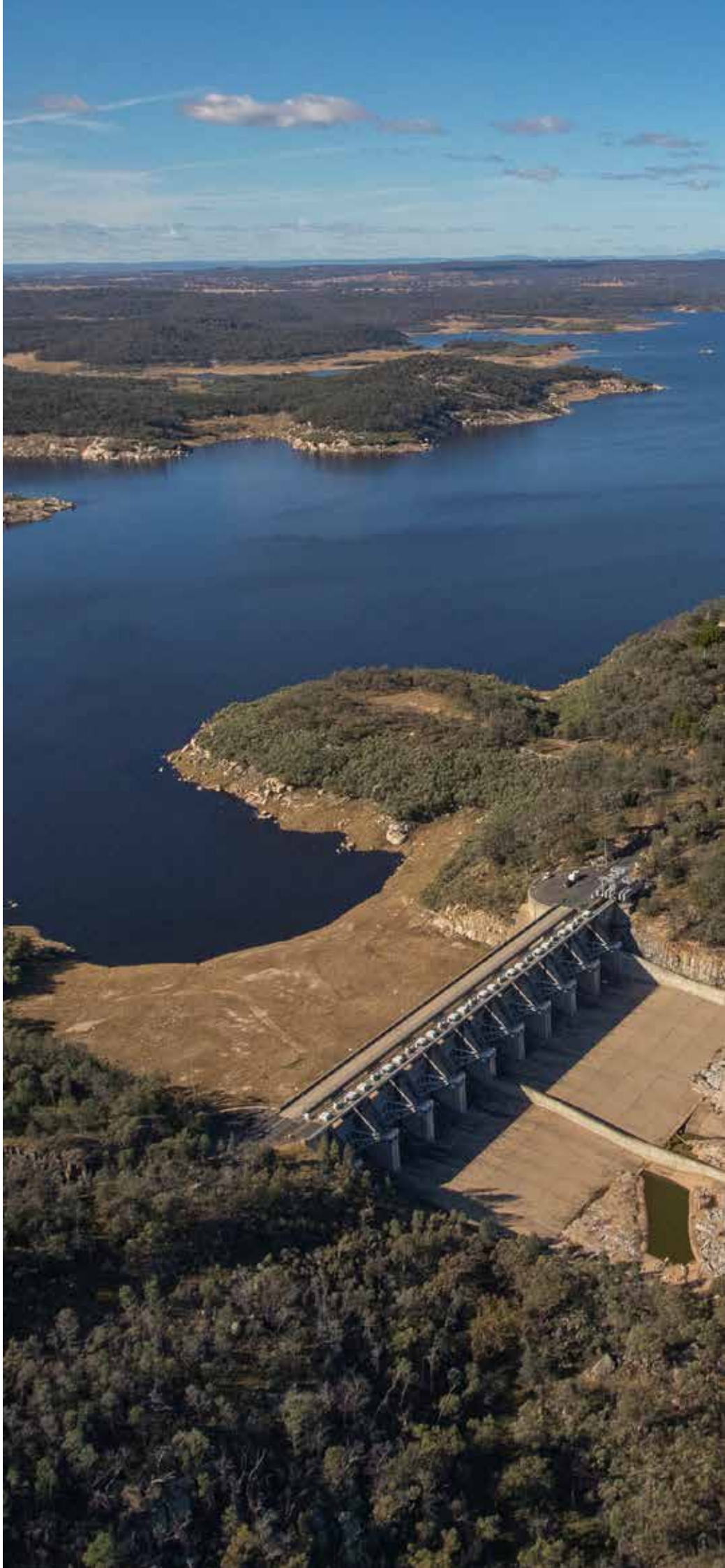


1	2	3	4	5	6
The decision maker on the Basin Plan and chairs Ministerial Council	Responsible for developing, implementing, evaluating and reviewing the Basin Plan Manages the River Murray system on behalf of joint governments	Policy and decision-making roles on state water shares and funding of Joint Programs as per the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement	Implements decisions consistent with the delegations from the Ministerial Council and advises on the Basin Plan	Provides advise to the Authority and Ministerial Council on Basin community issues	Provides independent oversight of, and monitors compliance with, the Basin Plan, water resource plans and intergovernmental agreements and arrangements

Operating environment

Spanning an area of more than one million square kilometres, the Murray-Darling Basin encompasses diverse geographic regions. This results in a complex operating environment for the MDBA with a range of factors outside of the agency's control.

In this section we consider factors such as climate change, socioeconomic factors, and Basin governance and assurance as they apply to the operating environment.



The Basin's changing climate

The Basin is warming because of global climate change. This will continue to have environmental, economic, social and cultural consequences for Basin communities.

There is uncertainty in how, where, and when climate change will impact rainfall and runoff. In the northern Basin, both increases and decreases in water availability are plausible. We expect that the southern Basin will have an underlying trend of declining water availability in the long-term. We may already be experiencing this. Twelve of our driest years occurred in the River Murray system between 1900 and 1997. The next twelve were experienced in the 22 years between 1998 and 2020.

Climate variability has always been a significant feature of the Basin's water resources and management. As the climate changes, this variability is projected to increase. The severity and frequency of extreme weather events are expected to intensify across the entire Basin.

Climate science cannot predict the exact future we will have, but it helps us understand the risks to Basin management outcomes. It can inform where action may be required now and where we need to be prepared in the future.

We have identified six key climate risks to the Basin from scientific studies and published papers involving the Basin and climate change:

- Reduced ability for communities to meet their water needs due to reductions in water volume, reliability and quality, increased reliance on groundwater and higher temperatures.
- Adverse impacts to water-dependent ecosystems, habitats and environmental assets due to reductions in water volumes and quality, changes in timing and intensity of rainfall, and higher temperatures and extremes, combined with other environmental change and degradation.
- Impacts on First Nations' objectives and requirements such as spiritual, Cultural, customary, economic, heritage, water rights and interests, due to climate-related changes in river systems and environment, including depleted water supplies and increased water demand.
- Adverse impacts on Basin employment and economic activities, particularly in the agriculture and tourism industries, due to rising temperatures and increased extractive water demand, coupled with increased variability and reductions in water availability, reliability, and quality.

- Adverse impacts on the amenity, liveability, and livelihoods of Basin communities due to changes to stream flow, reduced water quality, or climate-related changes in water-dependent environments.
- Reduced ability to enjoy recreation or to benefit from the economic or employment benefits of tourism and recreation, due to climate-related changes to the condition of the river system and environment, including reductions in water volume, reliability and quality and/or higher temperatures.

The 2026 Basin Plan Review will consider mechanisms to help respond to a changing climate. It will be informed by research underway including the Murray–Darling Water and Environment Research Program, the Murray–Darling Basin Sustainable Yields and the Sustainable Rivers Audit to provide a better understanding of management options.

A robust science-led approach along with broad collaboration will be needed to develop an effective and unified response.

Socioeconomic context

The Basin Plan was designed to deliver healthier and more sustainable outcomes for our rivers, floodplains and ecosystems in ways that balance, and take into account, socioeconomic considerations.

Work commissioned by the MDBA has found indications of positive social and economic conditions at the Basin-scale over the last ten years including steady increases in gross regional product, local jobs and population. Personal and community wellbeing across the Basin were consistently rated higher than the regional Australia average, and irrigated agriculture has been rebounding after a drop in 2019–20.

However, this Basin-scale perspective is not the full story. Some areas of the Basin are experiencing particularly challenging economic conditions as a result of changes in irrigated agriculture and wider economic trends. Many smaller communities in outer regional and remote communities are declining, while regional centres are growing, mainly driven by trends outside of water. Small regional communities reliant on agriculture tend to be more impacted by droughts and water management changes. Their ability to diversify their economies can be constrained by more limited access to infrastructure and other services.

Social and economic conditions for First Nations people are often below the Basin average. First Nations peoples' connection to Country, and their subsequent wellbeing, relies on water and a healthy environment to maintain

traditional practices and allow for economic opportunities. Indigenous employment rates in the Basin are much lower than non-Indigenous rates, reflecting the broader social and economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people across Australia.

We recognise the importance of partnering with First Nations people in the Basin, and a key focus of the 2026 Basin Plan Review is how to better identify and incorporate their knowledge, values and desired outcomes in the Basin Plan.

Through the Murray–Darling Water and Environment Research Program, the Basin Condition Monitoring Program and the Sustainable Rivers Audit, we are continuing to improve our understanding of the social and economic condition of the Basin. This, along with partnering with the broader science community, will allow us to make better informed policy and management decisions with, and for, the communities of the Basin.

Basin governance and assurance

The MDBA works in a highly complex and ever-changing operating environment. Six governments and a wide variety of stakeholders have an interest in the Basin Plan, the management of the River Murray and the activities of the MDBA. With this comes intense scrutiny of what we do.

Our success depends on the political compact that supported the development of the Water Act, the Basin Plan, and the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and ongoing community confidence in

the water reform agenda. As such, the MDBA focuses on building and maintaining partnerships and trusted relationships with stakeholders.

The Basin Plan was to have been implemented in full by 30 June 2024. In July 2023 we advised the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Environment and Water, that while significant progress has been made in accordance with the Basin Plan, full implementation would not be achieved by the original legislated deadline. This advice contributed to enactment of the *Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Act 2023*. The Act commenced on 7 December 2023 and made changes to the *Water Act 2007* and the *Basin Plan 2012*. These changes, and other reforms, provide more time, more options, more funding and more accountability to deliver on Basin Plan targets. Further detail on the reforms can be found on the [DCCEEW website](#).

Table 1 shows the current situation for each of the six key elements of the Basin Plan including issues and challenges. Implementation by Basin governments has been slower than originally anticipated, with the Australian Government as well as Basin states finding it difficult to meet timeframes and milestones. This is an extremely complex reform agenda, requiring deep and enduring change. The delay in progress is the sum of challenges connected to water resource plan delivery, progression of projects for the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism, implementation of the northern Basin toolkit projects, and environmental events such as floods and drought.

Table 1 Basin Plan elements of the MDBA's operating environment

Basin Plan element	Activities and responsibilities	Issues and challenges
<p>Water for the environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental water holders are responsible for the management and application of their water portfolios. The MDBA provides guidance and has a role in relation to the environmental management framework. The MDBA also coordinates the management of The Living Murray water for the environment entitlements and the River Murray Increased Flow entitlements which are owned by governments and managed through the Joint Venture (Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australian governments). Watering events in the southern Basin are managed by environmental water holders and river operators working together. The Southern Connected Basin Environmental Watering Committee coordinates the use of water for the environment in the southern Basin. The Northern Basin Environmental Watering Group (NBEWG) coordinates the use of environmental water in the northern Basin. The MDBA collaborates with the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) and Basin state governments to coordinate, plan and deliver water for the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The challenge is to adjust river operations to effectively deliver environmental water, enabling its use when and where it is needed to support a healthy river system. Success relies on completion of three main elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water recovered for the Bridging the Gap target. At 31 March 2024, water recovered at the Basin-scale is at 99% for surface water and 92% for groundwater. SDLAM (sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism) supply and constraints projects designed to achieve environmental outcomes with less water. The Restoring our Rivers legislation extended the timeframe for these projects to 31 December 2026. The recovery of 450 GL/y of additional environmental water to achieve enhanced environmental outcomes. The Water Act provides that the Minister must take all reasonable steps to meet the 450 GL target by 31 December 2027. The MDBA collaborates with the CEWH and Basin state governments to coordinate, plan and deliver water for the environment. The northern Basin toolkit includes a suite of measures that were identified in the Northern Basin Review to complement environmental water delivery and improve environmental outcomes in the northern Basin. Some toolkit measures were due for completion by June 2024, while others are to be completed by December 2026.

Basin Plan element	Activities and responsibilities	Issues and challenges
Water trade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anyone holding water entitlements may trade these freely, except where restrictions are permissible for reasons including physical constraints (such as geography or lack of connections to the system) or water supply considerations. The New South Wales, Queensland, South Australian and Victorian governments are primarily responsible for managing water markets, and each state has its own process and rules for trade. Irrigation infrastructure operators create and maintain trading rules within their networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDBA is responsible for monitoring trade across the Barmah Choke on the River Murray, and restricting trade if necessary, to protect water delivery to existing downstream entitlement holders. A trade restriction has been in effect since 2014. As a result of the findings of an Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) inquiry into water trade, work is underway by governments to reform the water market and restore confidence. This was a major focus of the Restoring Our Rivers Act which commenced on 7 December 2023, putting in place legislative provisions to increase oversight and regulation of markets for tradeable water rights including the handling and announcement of water market decisions and other water markets information.
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State governments have primary responsibility to ensure that water users comply with state water management laws. Following amendments to the Water Act and the Basin Plan, the Inspector-General of Water Compliance (IGWC) now has responsibility for enforcing compliance with the Basin Plan. The MDBA retains responsibility for monitoring and evaluation and has an ongoing assurance role in water accounting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each state has different arrangements and different agencies responsible for water compliance. The establishment of the IGWC in 2021 aims to restore confidence in the Basin Plan by separating compliance from monitoring and evaluation functions.
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDBA is responsible for evaluating the Basin Plan and some monitoring programs, including monitoring water quality in the southern Basin and monitoring social and economic conditions in the Basin. We work collaboratively with Basin states to conduct Basin Plan evaluations and report on implementation progress. Basin states are responsible for monitoring activities and provide this data for MDBA evaluations and reviews. Research programs with other agencies and research institutions complement monitoring and evaluation to ensure that future management of the Basin is based on the best available information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent reviews, including by the Productivity Commission, have found that research and monitoring across the Basin is fragmented and overall investment in freshwater science has declined. Collaborative research programs such as the Murray–Darling Basin Water and Environmental Research Program are intended to strengthen scientific knowledge of the Basin and inform future Basin evaluations. The Basin Plan Review will look at factors including what has changed and how the Plan can be improved, particularly in its ability to respond to future conditions.

Basin Plan element	Activities and responsibilities	Issues and challenges
Sustainable diversion limits (SDL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basin state governments are responsible for improving estimates of the baseline diversion limit (BDL), which is an estimate of diversion levels under pre-Basin Plan settings. The MDBA is responsible for reviewing and validating BDL estimates, which are accredited by the Australian Government minister responsible for water, through water resource plans (WRPs). The MDBA is also responsible for receiving and reviewing data from the states, and establishing, maintaining and publishing the registers of take for SDL compliance purposes. The IGWC manages any non-compliance of SDL compliance by Basin states. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all WRPs are accredited, limiting the capacity of the Inspector-General to enforce compliance. Some stakeholders may see the improvements in estimates of the limits as allowing more water use. This is not the case as this water is already being used.
Water resource plans (WRPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MDBA assists Basin states to prepare WRPs and assesses and recommends them for accreditation. The Australian Government minister responsible for water accredits WRPs. Once a WRP is accredited, the IGWC is responsible for monitoring compliance with that plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At June 2024, four of the 20 WRPs in NSW remain to be accredited. These water resource plans were withdrawn from assessment for further work and will be resubmitted in due course. The MDBA has developed guidelines to assist Basin states amend WRPs over time to adapt to new information and changes. WRPs in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory are accredited and in operation.

Productivity Commission inquiries

Another important accountability mechanism under the Water Act is inquiries into the effectiveness of Basin Plan and WRP implementation by the Productivity Commission every five years. The second such inquiry conducted by the Commission was publicly released in February 2024. The report is available on the [Productivity Commission website](#).

Capability

Workforce capability

The MDBA workforce is fundamental to the successful delivery of our purpose, *Rivers*, for generations, and to ensuring we achieve our ambitions and outcomes.

We have an ongoing need for skilled and talented people working together across all areas of our organisation. Figure 9 demonstrates the diverse range of capabilities and skills that we need within the MDBA.

We continue to build on the different elements of our enterprise workforce plan to help attract and retain the staff we need to deliver our outcomes. Division and branch level workplans have been developed to support the objectives of the broader enterprise-wide plan and help embed the changes needed to keep the MDBA moving forward.

We have made significant investments in our senior leadership cohort to ensure we have skills and attributes needed to guide the MDBA into the future. This year we are focused on developing our middle management group to make sure our people have the key tools and support needed to succeed in their roles.

We have commenced work on an Employee Value Proposition for the MDBA, to market the agency as an employer of choice. We aim to achieve a 20% growth in the number of external applicants applying for our roles. We are already seeing an increase in interest in careers at the MDBA which we aim to build upon.

The recent approval of the MDBA Enterprise Agreement 2024–2027 is another key element helping to build and maintain our workforce capability. Achieving the agreement is a great result following a significant amount of work. It provides a range of attractive and flexible conditions to strengthen our appeal as an agency of choice for both current and future employees.

The MDBA is committed to a culture of professional integrity. We expect, empower and support our people to act with honesty, transparency and accountability at all times and all levels.

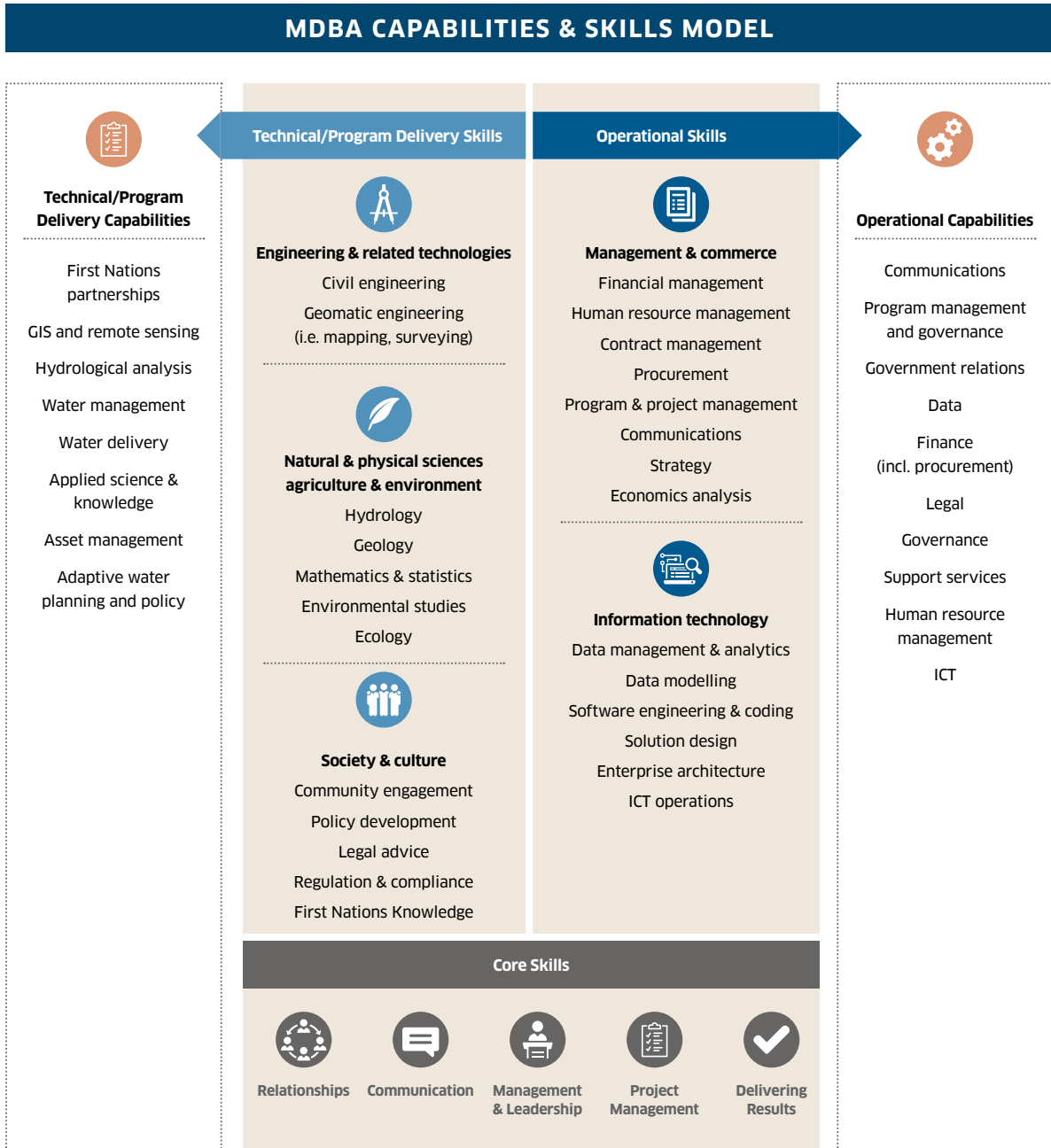
Rebalancing the Australian Public Service (APS)

The Australian Government has a reform agenda to ensure the APS is a model employer with the capability to perform its functions well.

The MDBA has reviewed the requirements of the APS Strategic Commissioning Framework and is committed to ensuring we have the right people, at the right time, with the right skills in our workforce. We are deliberate and considered in our approach to resourcing our functions, which includes the engagement of third-party providers, independent advice and assurance providers to deliver on our objectives.

In 2024–25, the MDBA has identified \$764,000 in potential savings related to ensuring our core work is delivered through our APS staff. These targeted reductions are in addition to significant progress the MDBA has already made to reduce reliance on outsourcing by increasing our Average Staffing Levels (ASL) numbers through a conversion of 30 ASL in 2022–23.

Figure 9 MDBA workforce capabilities and skills



MDBA governance structures

Our governance structure ensures that the MDBA acts strategically and that we deliver our objectives effectively. A strong governance framework defines responsibilities and ensures accountabilities. It supports effective decision-making, transparency, and assurance.

The MDBA’s Chief Executive is supported in his role as Accountable Authority by the Audit and Risk Committee, the Executive Board and its sub-committees (see Figure 10). At the MDBA, these governance committees play a key role to uphold our values and achieve our purpose by overseeing and managing risk, monitoring performance and providing a forum for consultation.

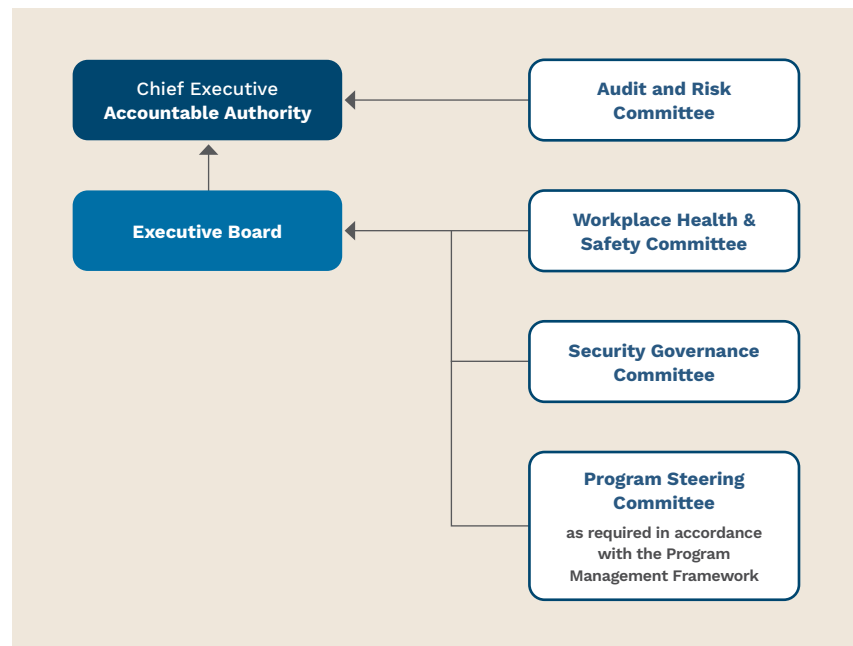
The Executive Board sets the MDBA’s strategic direction, informed by the integrated business planning approach to make decisions on priorities and resourcing. It also determines the MDBA’s risk appetite and tolerances and oversees strategic risks that may affect our ability to achieve our purpose and objectives.

The Audit and Risk Committee provides independent advice on the appropriateness of financial and performance reporting, risk management and internal control mechanisms.

In addition to these standing committees the MDBA also assembles Program Steering Committees as needed, in accordance with our Program and Project Governance Framework.

As a whole, MDBA’s governance structure supports compliance with legislative, regulatory, financial, and other obligations.

Figure 10 MDBA’s governance structure



Infrastructure capability

The MDBA's infrastructure capability enables us to better anticipate, identify and respond to impacts across the diversity of the Basin.

Hydrological modelling and data sharing

Climate change, shifting usage patterns, drought and extreme weather events are placing additional pressure on the Murray–Darling Basin. The MDBA is working to improve the models we use to inform decision making, as well as our data sharing ability.

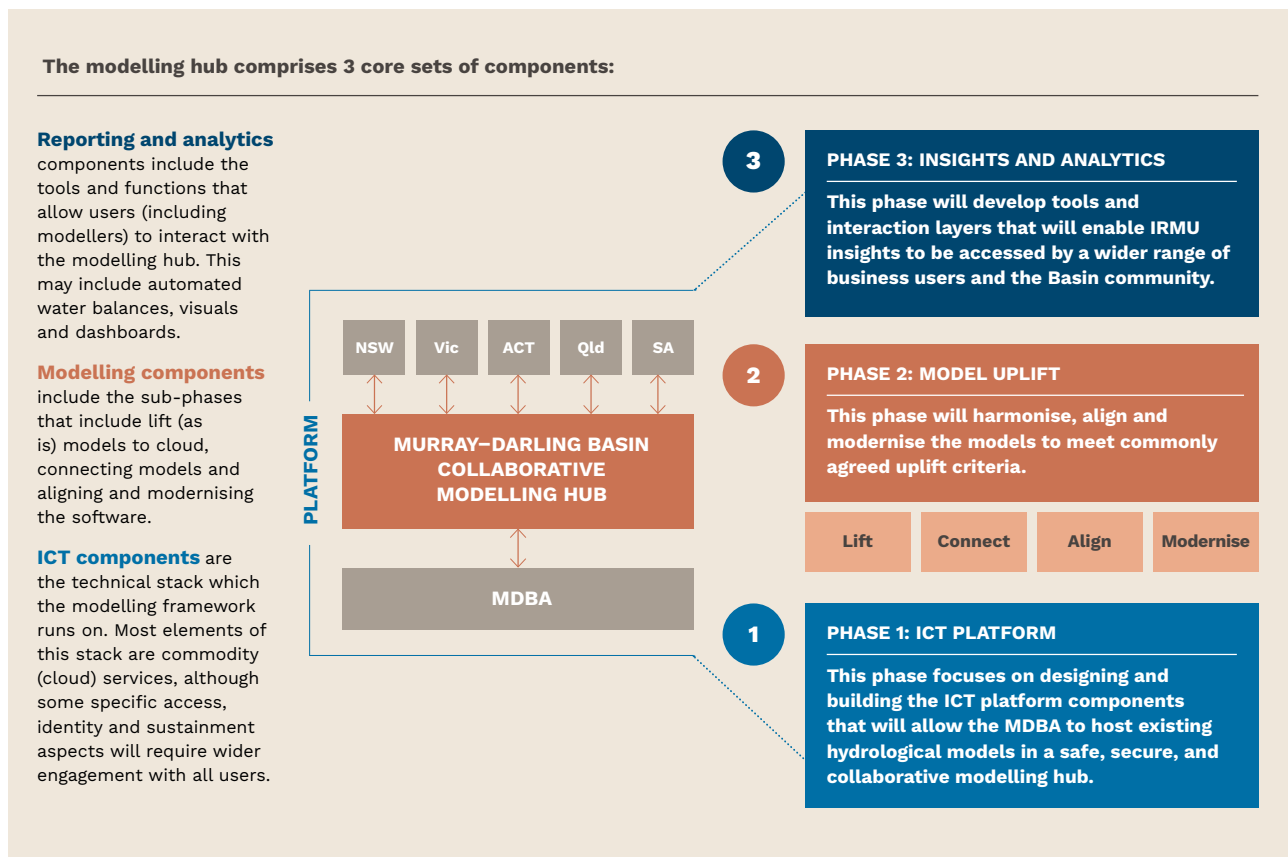
The Integrated River Modelling Uplift (IRMU) Program, a major investment in hydrological modelling, will allow better integration of the 24 river models that are used across the Basin.

IRMU will enhance access to leading technology and enable faster integration and application of new insights and data across jurisdictional boundaries.

The Program will deliver a Collaborative Modelling Hub – a common library for all shared and approved data and models – which can be used by all jurisdictions.

Phase 1 of the Program, the ICT platform, was completed in July 2023 (see Figure 11) and work now progresses on the remaining two phases: model uplift and insights and analytics.

Figure 11 The Murray–Darling Basin Collaborative Modelling Hub being developed by IRMU





ICT capability

Our ICT capability underpins our ability to achieve outcomes by providing the infrastructure, systems and services our workforce needs. Specifically, it provides:

- access to ICT resources for our staff who are distributed across the Basin
- the ability for teams to collaborate and communicate
- communication with internal and external stakeholders
- access to data, information and knowledge

- systems that support operations, research and data gathering, policy development and corporate services
- communication channels that provide visibility of the Basin and joint efforts to manage it for our extensive stakeholder and collaboration networks
- an increasingly integrated picture of the Murray–Darling Basin beyond the boundaries of systems, organisational structures and agencies.

Our MDBA Digital Strategy 2023–25 presents our digital progress to date and identifies ways to further strengthen our data and information technology management capability, to ensure ongoing support of emerging business priorities.

As we plan our data and analytical capabilities for the 2026 Basin Plan Review, we are investigating Artificial Intelligence and machine learning opportunities, along with optimising our operating environment, with a focus on performance, reliability and security (information and systems).

Risk oversight and management

The MDBA plays a pivotal role in the successful implementation of the Basin Plan and operating the River Murray system for Basin governments. Effective management of risk is essential to achieving these objectives and our purpose.

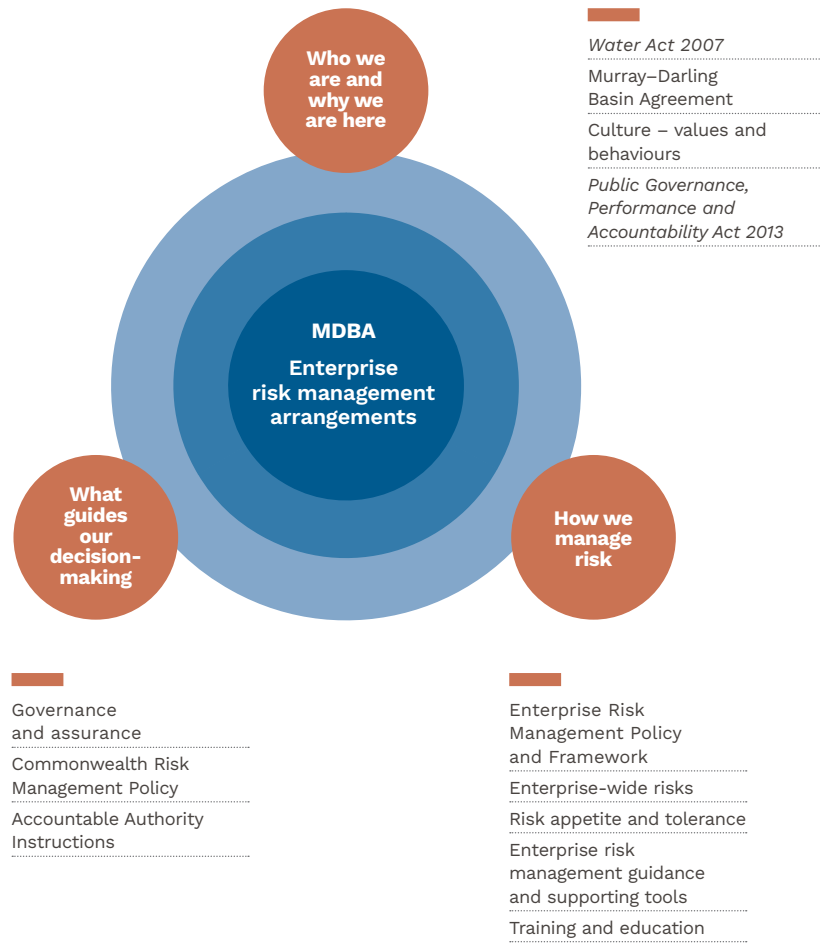
The MDBA's risk management framework is consistent with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy. The Chief Executive, taking into account the advice of the Executive Board and the Audit and Risk Committee, establishes the MDBA's appetite and tolerance for risk and oversees the framework.

The MDBA takes a holistic approach to risk by linking risk management practices to all aspects of our business. All staff at the MDBA are accountable for managing risks, with the Executive taking a proactive role in managing risks at the enterprise level, ensuring our risk management is effectively supporting our purpose and objectives.

See our approach to enterprise risk management at Figure 12.

In addition, our Audit and Risk Committee, supported by our internal audit function, continues to provide independent assurance to the Accountable Authority to uphold an effective governance, risk management and compliance framework.

Figure 12 MDBA's enterprise risk management arrangements



The MDBA accepts that it is not possible, or desirable, to eliminate all risk. Risk is integral to the complex environment in which we operate: a changing climate, reliance on collaboration, diverse stakeholders and a need for highly

skilled expertise. Because of this complex operating environment, we must understand and consider the risk appetite of our stakeholders and partners, and the context in which decisions are made.

The enterprise risks for the MDBA and our approach to mitigating them are provided in Table 2.

Effective risk management is guided by our Risk Appetite Statement and allows for innovation, improved operations

and increased capability, whilst maintaining a zero appetite for fraud and corruption and a low tolerance for risks arising from adverse work health and safety and non-compliance.

Table 2 Enterprise risks for the MDBA and our approach to mitigation

Key risk	Mitigation approach
Strategy and prioritisation	
<p>The MDBA is unable to develop and deliver against a prioritised Authority-wide strategy</p>	<p>Our staff members are committed to our purpose and our values underpin everything we do.</p> <p>We will continue to translate strategy into operational plans with supporting performance and planning frameworks to prioritise, implement and monitor our program of work within agreed timeframes.</p> <p>Building on our improved risk practices, our risk management is continuing to evolve with a focus on embedding positive risk culture in 2024–25.</p> <p>We maintain strong and enduring relationships with key stakeholders through transparency and trust.</p>
Information management and access	
<p>The MDBA is unable to manage, access and appropriately share high quality and trusted information</p>	<p>The MDBA strives to continually improve information management governance to ensure that access to high quality information is maintained.</p> <p>We are making changes to ensure that information management is consistent across the organisation and for it to be seen as a core responsibility of all staff.</p> <p>Our Digital Strategy mitigates risk associated with information management and accessibility through advanced technologies and robust processes that ensure the security, integrity, and availability of our data and information.</p>
Program delivery	
<p>The MDBA fails to deliver a major program or capability</p>	<p>The MDBA has robust program and project management processes in place and is continuing to progress its project management maturity through its workforce capability development.</p> <p>The MDBA sets appropriate targets for our KPIs and measures at the beginning of the financial year, then checks on progress after 6 months. This provides an opportunity to rectify any problems that could lead to failure to deliver.</p> <p>The MDBA strives to maintain good people capability through development of the MDBA Capabilities and Skills Model which identifies the agency’s needs.</p> <p>We are also working to further embed consistent and efficient enterprise-wide approaches to program delivery.</p>

Key risk	Mitigation approach
Information security	
<p>Compromise of MDBA's information systems, including via cyber-attack</p>	<p>The MDBA protects information systems through a series of measures along with maintaining core technical capabilities. Industry standard IT security measures are used to keep pace with threats.</p> <p>Regular risk assessments are undertaken for MDBA applications and software, with particular focus on cyber security and business continuity. We invest in industry standard IT measures and digital expertise and systems to keep pace with the threat of cyber incidents.</p> <p>We invest in industry standard IT measures and digital expertise and systems to keep pace with cyber threats.</p> <p>To prevent common avenues of compromise, we make sure staff are aware of threats and how to respond to them.</p> <p>We are investigating emerging opportunities, and threats such as AI and how to best guard against them.</p>
Lack of effective innovation	
<p>The MDBA does not effectively innovate for the future</p>	<p>Innovation at the MDBA has been aimed at solving specific problems rather than having an overall strategic aim.</p> <p>We are reviewing the way we innovate to reap the additional rewards that structured, pro-active and holistic innovation will bring.</p>
Workforce capability	
<p>The MDBA does not maintain a capable, values-driven and engaged workforce with a healthy workplace culture.</p>	<p>Our People Strategy 2021–2026 enables us to deliver our strategic priorities and shows how we are supporting and developing our people so they are capable, engaged and connected. We continue to build management skills through diversity and inclusion, leadership and talent programs.</p> <p>The MDBA is aware that our workforce is key to delivering our purpose and vision. We continue to invest in the wellbeing of our staff, addressing physical health, mental health, environmental hazards and personal development.</p> <p>The MDBA Enterprise Workforce Plan 2023–2027 will guide us over the next 3 years to ensure we have the right people with the right skills at the right time.</p>

Key risk	Mitigation approach
Health and safety	
<p>The MDBA does not create and maintain a safe working environment</p>	<p>The MDBA is committed to health and safety at work. We have a dedicated Health and Safety Committee which meets four times a year.</p> <p>We maintain a culture of safety-first and undertake pro-active initiatives such as regular workplace inspections, agency-wide reviews of risks, annual flu vaccination, and making available confidential support services for staff members.</p> <p>The MDBA adheres to the Code of Practice: Managing Psychosocial Hazards At Work. Psychosocial risks are managed through the MDBA's mental health strategy and maturity assessment against the Australian Public Service Commission's framework.</p> <p>This year we are undertaking a work health and safety audit to assess and address any agency weaknesses.</p>
Relationships	
<p>The MDBA is unable to maintain the support and confidence of key stakeholders</p>	<p>The MDBA continues to nurture, maintain and leverage strong collaborative partnerships for mutual benefit and efficiency.</p> <p>We prioritise stakeholder engagement, and report on communication outcomes each year. We aim for two-way engagement – listening as well as providing information.</p> <p>We continue to recognise the deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection that First Nations have to their lands and waters and will engage with Traditional Owners in line with the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent and the Akwé: Kon Guidelines.</p> <p>We strive to provide transparency in decision making and maintain the confidence and trust of all stakeholders.</p> <p>The 2026 Basin Plan Review will provide opportunity for increased consultation and engagement.</p>

Cooperation

The Basin Plan relies on cooperation between many stakeholders, from governments to scientists, First Nations and the Australian public. We estimate that the MDBA liaises with over 1,000 stakeholder groups, all of whom have an interest in the implementation and outcomes of the Basin Plan and the MDBA's activities.

Figure 13 shows the main collaborations we engage in.

We work with Basin state governments of New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory as well as the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), to coordinate work programs and oversee the implementation of the Basin Plan.

Our work is entwined with other agencies that have roles under the Water Act including the DCCEEW, the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Inspector-General of Water Compliance, who enforces compliance across the Basin.

Dialogue with Basin communities is essential for the success of the Basin Plan. The Basin Community Committee established by the Authority under the Water Act has representatives from all parts of the Basin and is a formal advisory body to the Authority.

In addition to our regional offices and regional engagement staff, we work closely with community forums across the Basin. We host and participate in conferences, field days and events to maintain an understanding of local issues and priorities.

Relationships with First Nations people and groups across the Basin continues to be a key priority. This includes involvement of First Nations people in environmental water planning, our science and knowledge programs and more broadly in our preparations for the 2026 Basin Plan Review.

The MDBA also engages with local government and special interest groups including peak industry bodies for agriculture, forestry, tourism, the environment and conservation.

Science and research collaborations with universities and research organisations including CSIRO, GeoScience Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology and the One Basin CRC are essential to developing a robust evidence base in the hydrological, environmental, social and economic sciences.

Our commitment to transparency

As a science-based and evidence-driven organisation the MDBA is committed to sharing information about Murray–Darling Basin water management.

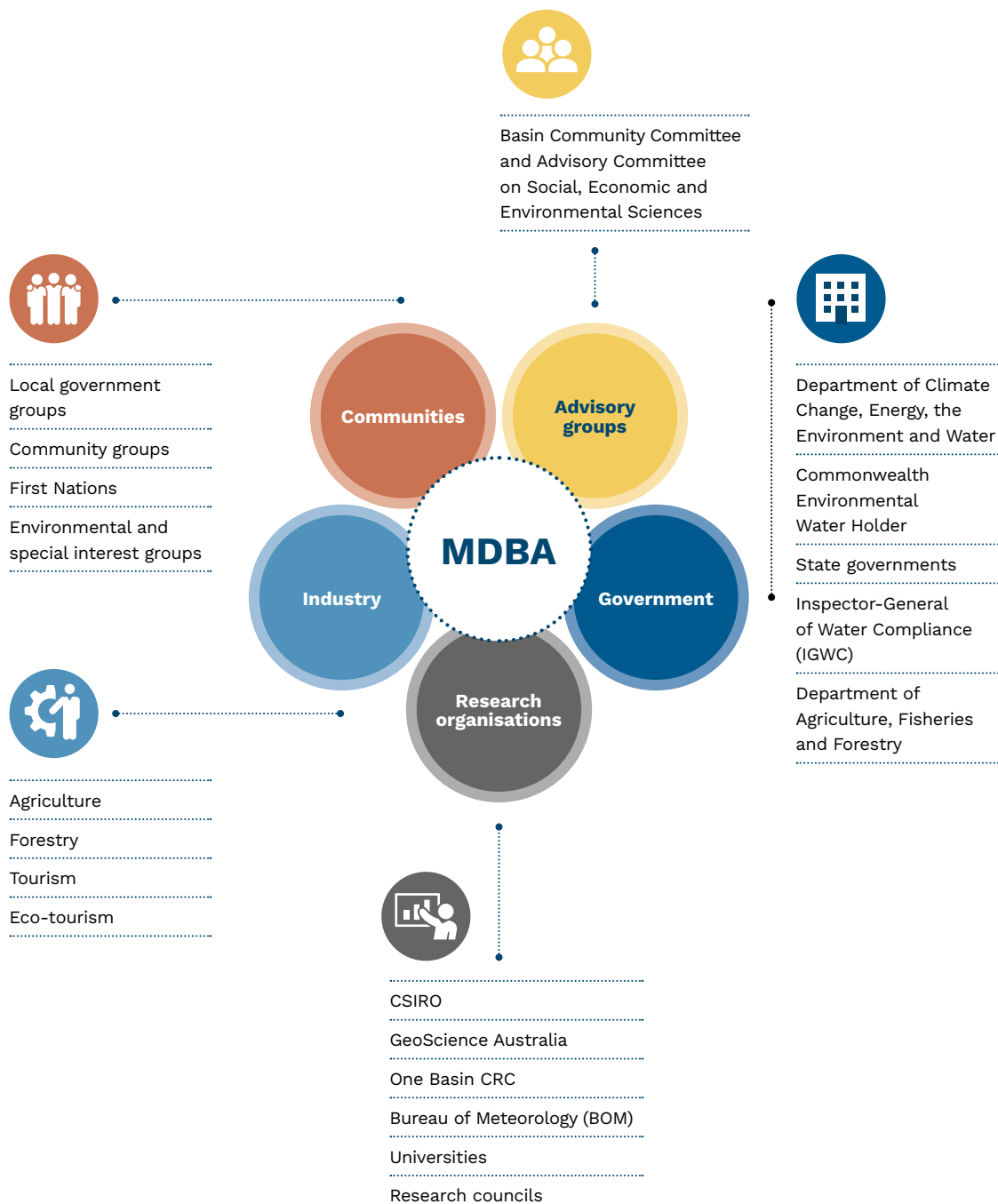
We develop advice and make decisions based on the best available peer reviewed research along with stakeholder feedback and multiple sources of evidence. Transparency is essential. Only by making available the information we use, can we maintain trust and confidence in our activities.

The Integrated River Modelling Uplift (IRMU) Program will help generate shared understandings. It will provide a public-facing portal that gives unprecedented access to Basin-wide modelling information.

We have built a strong regional presence for the MDBA to improve connections with the community and Basin stakeholders. We value the free flow of knowledge and the common understanding of Basin matters that this closer relationship brings.

We aim for timely, targeted communication with our various audiences and stakeholders.

Figure 13 MDBA's collaboration network



Our performance

The MDBA is a corporate Commonwealth entity. We plan, measure and report on our performance under the Commonwealth Performance Framework.

We are part of the Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water portfolio.

The MDBA has one outcome and one program. The MDBA delivers this through two key activity.

Funding

Our two key activities are funded differently.

Key activity 1 – Driving implementation of the Basin Plan

The Australian Government provides funding to implement the Basin Plan. This includes Basin Plan activities as well as one-off initiatives such as the Integrated River Modelling Uplift Program and the Hydrometric Networks and Remote Sensing Program.

Key activity 2 – Efficiently and effectively operate the River Murray system for partner governments

Funding is provided through Joint Program contributions from Basin states and the Australian Government to deliver on the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement functions.

Outcome 1

Equitable and sustainable use of the Murray–Darling Basin by governments and the community including through development and implementation of a Basin Plan, operation of the River Murray system, shared natural resource management programs, research, information and advice.

Program 1.1

Equitable and sustainable use of the Murray–Darling Basin

To improve the sustainability of the Murray–Darling Basin through integrated reform and management of water and other natural resources for the long-term benefit of the Australian community.

Planning and reporting

Our corporate plan is our primary planning document. It shows the activities planned for the next four financial years to achieve our purpose along with how we will measure success. Our Performance Information Summary for 2024–25 is on page 40.

We report against measures in the annual performance statement in each year’s annual report.

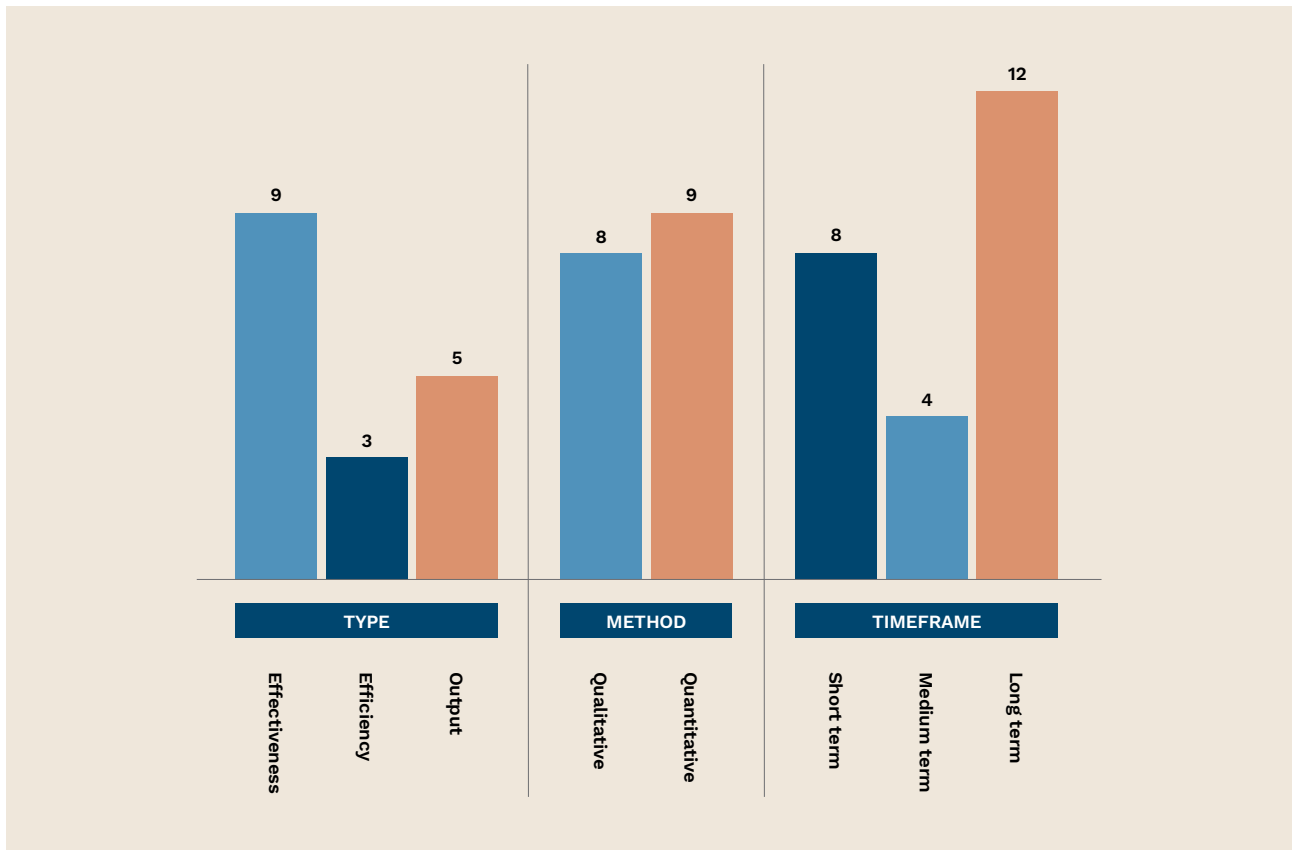
Types of measures

The performance measures set out for 2024–25 can be categorised by type, method and time frame, as shown in Figure 14.

Performance measures for 2024–25

MDBA's purpose: Rivers, for generations				Effectiveness	Efficiency	Output	Qualitative	Quantitative	Short term	Medium term	Long term		
MDBA's ambition: Bringing together what's needed in water management to help achieve a healthy working Basin for the benefit of generations of Australians													
MDBA's key activities	Key performance Indicators	Measures and measure type											
<p>Key activity 1 Drive the successful implementation of the Basin Plan</p> <p>Objectives Fully implement the Basin Plan. Review and refine the Basin Plan.</p>	<p>KPI 1 The Basin Plan is operational and adaptive to changing conditions</p> <p>KPI 2 Use the best available environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations to report on the Basin Plan and make robust and defensible decisions</p> <p>KPI 3 Improve transparency and ensure stakeholders are aware of and understand the MDBA's role</p> <p>KPI 4 Deliver the Basin Plan Review</p>	1.1	Timely assessment of submitted WRPs	●				●	●	●			
		1.2	Information from SDL accounting is used to inform decision making	●			●		●		●		
		1.3	Effective planning for environmental water use	●		●	●		●		●		
		2.1	The MDBA reports on the effectiveness of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan			●	●					●	
		2.2	Implement a robust, best practice Science Quality Assurance framework			●	●	●		●		●	
		3.1	Awareness and understanding of the MDBA's role based on market research (conducted every 3 years)	●			●					●	
		3.2	The MDBA delivers communication, engagement and media activities which improve stakeholder awareness and understanding of the MDBA's role	●			●					●	
		4.1	Deliver the 2026 Basin Plan Review			●	●				●		
		<p>Key activity 2 Efficiently and effectively operate the River Murray system for partner governments</p> <p>Objectives Run the River Murray System. Reform and optimise management of the River Murray System.</p>	<p>KPI 5 Operate the River Murray system in accordance with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement</p> <p>KPI 6 Maintain and improve the health of the River Murray system (and the Basin where relevant) in accordance with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and associated agreement</p>	5.1	The MDBA has coordinated and overseen the asset activities as agreed and approved by the Ministerial Council in the Annual Work Plan			●	●		●		●
				5.2	Number of adverse rulings from jurisdictional dam safety regulators	●				●	●		●
5.3	Number of unscheduled major outages of assets				●			●	●		●		
5.4	The MDBA has fulfilled its efficiency related obligations under the Objectives and Outcomes as independently assessed				●			●			●		
5.5	The MDBA has fulfilled its effectiveness related obligations under the Objectives and Outcomes as independently assessed			●				●			●		
6.1	Maintain or improve the environmental health of the 7 key sites of the River Murray system			●				●				●	
6.2	The Basin salinity target, as identified in schedule B of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement, is achieved			●				●				●	
6.3	Timely monitoring and reporting on water quality in the River Murray System to aid in decision making				●		●			●		●	

Figure 14 Types of performance measures used for the 2024–25 year



Note: Some measures are in more than one category, such as short as well as long term timeframes, so some bars add to more than 16, the total number of measures.

Key activity 1:

Drive the successful implementation of the Basin Plan

Role of the MDBA

Lead the implementation of the Basin Plan in collaboration with Basin state and territory governments and other Australian Government agencies.

Objectives

- Fully implement the Basin Plan.
- Review and refine the Basin Plan.

Actions

- Assess water resource plans (WRPs) for consistency with the Basin Plan for accreditation, including enabling amendments to accredited water resource plans.
- Publish the annual sustainable diversion limits (SDL) accounts.
- Develop annual watering priorities.
- Undertake assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the Basin Plan.
- Conduct quality research to inform Basin water resource management.
- Undertake the 2026 Basin Plan Review.
- Deliver a Constraints Relaxation Implementation Roadmap.
- Continue the four-year program to integrate Murray–Darling Basin river modelling.

Expected impact

- Accreditation of WRPs which are consistent with the Basin Plan.
- WRPs evolve and adapt to new information. WRPs are reaccredited to reflect improvements.
- Improved Murray–Darling Basin water resources accounting and reporting.
- Water use across the Basin is reported transparently to enable assessment of compliance with SDLs.
- Effective use of environmental water.
- Effectiveness of the Basin Plan is known and understood.
- Evidence–based policy and strategic decision making founded on robust and defensible data.

How performance on Key activity 1 is measured, 2024–25 to 2027–28

KPI	Measure	Target			
		FY 2024–25	FY 2025–26	FY 2026–27	FY 2027–28
KPI 1 – The Basin Plan is operational and adaptive to changing conditions	1.1 Timely assessment of submitted WRPs	Assessment conducted in 13 weeks for submitted plans	Assessment conducted in 13 weeks for submitted plans	N/A *pending outcome of Basin Plan Review	N/A *pending outcome of Basin Plan Review
	1.2 Information from SDL accounting is used to inform decision making	Inspector-General of Water Compliance uses SDL accounting information to inform decisions relating to compliance	Inspector-General of Water Compliance uses SDL accounting information to inform decisions relating to compliance	Inspector-General of Water Compliance uses SDL accounting information to inform decisions relating to compliance	Inspector-General of Water Compliance uses SDL accounting information to inform decisions relating to compliance
	1.3 Effective planning for environmental water use	Delivery of Basin annual environmental water priorities	Delivery of Basin annual environmental water priorities. Completion of the 5-year review of the Basin-wide Environmental Watering Strategy	Delivery of Basin annual environmental water priorities. Effective use of environmental water as assessed in the Basin Plan Evaluation report	Delivery of Basin annual environmental water priorities
KPI 2 – Use the best available environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations to report on the Basin Plan and make robust and defensible decisions	2.1 The MDBA reports on the effectiveness of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan	Basin Plan annual report published	Basin Plan Evaluation published	Basin Plan annual report published	Basin Plan annual report published
	2.2 Implement a robust, best practice Science Quality Assurance framework	Increasing trend in use	Sustained use	Sustained use	Sustained use
KPI 3 – Improve transparency and ensure stakeholders are aware of and understand the Basin Plan, and the MDBA's role	3.1 Awareness and understanding of the Basin Plan based on MDBA stakeholder and/ or market research (conducted every 3 years)	5% increase on 2020 results, which found 67% awareness	N/A	N/A	Increase on 2024 awareness *pending results
	3.2 The MDBA delivers stakeholder engagement activities which improve stakeholder awareness and understanding of River Murray operations and the MDBA's role	Case study: MDBA Transparency, communications and engagement activities	Case study: MDBA Transparency, communications and engagement activities	Case study: MDBA Transparency, communications and engagement activities	Case study: MDBA Transparency, communications and engagement activities
KPI 4 – Deliver the Basin Plan Review	4.1 Deliver the 2026 Basin Plan Review	Authority approval of the Basin Plan Evaluation	Authority approval of the Discussion Paper	Authority approval of the Final Report	N/A

Key activity 2:

Efficiently and effectively operate the River Murray system for partner governments

Role of the MDBA

In partnership with Basin governments, promote and coordinate planning, management and sharing of water and other natural resources of the Basin. The water sharing and joint management arrangements for this partnership are set out in the *Murray–Darling Basin Agreement 2008*. The Joint Programs include operations of the River Murray System and natural resource management programs.

The natural resource management programs have evolved as a shared response to the need to manage some of the environmental consequences of water use in the Basin.

A work plan is agreed between the Joint Program parties each year with the MDBA specifying the key activities to be undertaken by the MDBA.

Objectives

- Run the River Murray System.
- Reform and optimise management of the River Murray System.

Actions

- Operate the River Murray System in accordance with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement.
- Maintain and improve the health of the River Murray System (and the Basin where relevant) in accordance with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and associated agreements including meeting The Living Murray water quality and salinity requirements.
- Uplift the Joint Programs budget and asset management arrangements (Joint Venture Improvement Project) to be more transparent, considered and efficient.
- Implement asset management strategies and oversee asset management activities including asset upgrades, rules changes, data and tools and new delivery mechanism for the future operation of the system.
- Undertake reviews into system operations as agreed by the Joint Programs.

Expected impact

- River Murray Operations assets allow management and delivery of water – efficiently, effectively and safely.
- The waters of the River Murray System are:
 - shared between the states of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia as per the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement, and
 - managed to meet multiple outcomes and objectives set by partner governments.
- Improved environmental outcomes in the southern connected system, consistent with the Basin Plan.
- Delivery of all water for the environment in the southern Basin is coordinated, including the jointly held water portfolio.
- Water management, monitoring and First Nations engagement at the River Murray icon sites supports adaptive management.
- Partner governments jointly manage salinity to deliver the Basin Salinity Management 2030 strategy, consistent with Schedule B of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement.
- The water quality of the River Murray system is monitored consistent with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and informs improved management.
- Increased community awareness and involvement in actions being undertaken at local scales to recover native fish and prevent pest fish incursions.

How performance on Key activity 2 is measured, 2024–25 to 2027–28

KPI	Measure	Target			
		FY 2024–25	FY 2025–26	FY 2026–27	FY 2027–28
KPI 5 – Operate the River Murray System in accordance with the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement	5.1 The MDBA has coordinated and overseen the asset activities as agreed and approved by the Ministerial Council in the Annual Work Plan	Performance endorsed by River Murray Operations Committee	Performance endorsed by River Murray Operations Committee	Performance endorsed by River Murray Operations Committee	Performance endorsed by River Murray Operations Committee
	5.2 Number of adverse rulings from jurisdictional dam safety regulators	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero
	5.3 Number of unscheduled major outages of assets	Zero	Zero	Zero	Zero
	5.4 The MDBA has fulfilled its obligations under the Objectives and Outcomes as independently assessed	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*
	5.5 The MDBA has fulfilled its effectiveness related obligations under the Objectives and Outcomes as independently assessed	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*	Independent review undertaken to confirm obligations met*

KPI	Measure	Target			
		FY 2024–25	FY 2025–26	FY 2026–27	FY 2027–28
KPI 6 – Maintain and improve the health of the River Murray system (and the Basin where relevant) in accordance with Murray–Darling Basin Agreement and associated agreement	6.1 Maintained or improved the environmental health of the 7 key sites of the River Murray system	Majority (70%) of sites are either maintained in good condition (A or B report card grade) or have an improved report card grade from the previous year	Majority (70%) of sites are either maintained in good condition (A or B report card grade) or have an improved report card grade from the previous year	Majority (70%) of sites are either maintained in good condition (A or B report card grade) or have an improved report card grade from the previous year	Majority (70%) of sites are either maintained in good condition (A or B report card grade) or have an improved report card grade from the previous year
	6.2 The Basin salinity target, as identified in schedule B of the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement, is achieved	The average daily salinity at Morgan at a simulated level of less than 800 EC for at least 95% of the time, under the hydrologic conditions of the benchmark period	The average daily salinity at Morgan at a simulated level of less than 800 EC for at least 95% of the time, under the hydrologic conditions of the benchmark period	The average daily salinity at Morgan at a simulated level of less than 800 EC for at least 95% of the time, under the hydrologic conditions of the benchmark period	The average daily salinity at Morgan at a simulated level of less than 800 EC for at least 95% of the time, under the hydrologic conditions of the benchmark period
	6.3 Timely monitoring and reporting on water quality in the River Murray system to aid in decision making	100% monthly Reports sent and/ or published	100% monthly Reports sent and/ or published	100% monthly Reports sent and/ or published	100% monthly Reports sent and/ or published

* Denotes the independent review occurs after the completion of the water year and therefore the results presented are for the year before.

Compliance statement

This corporate plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in section 35 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (the PGPA Act). The table below details the matters included to comply with section 16E of the PGPA Rule.

Source	Matters to be included	Page
Introduction		
PGPA Rule 16E(1)	The corporate plan for a Commonwealth entity must cover a period of at least 4 reporting periods for the entity.	6
PGPA Rule 16E(2)(a)	The corporate plan must include a statement that the plan is prepared for paragraph 35(1)(b) of the PGPA Act.	6
PGPA Rule 16E(2)(b)	The corporate plan must include the reporting period for which the plan is prepared.	6
PGPA Rule 16E(2)(c)	The corporate plan must include the reporting periods covered by the plan.	6
Purposes		
PGPA Rule 16E(2)	The corporate plan must include the purposes of the entity.	11
Key activities		
PGPA Rule 16E(3)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include the key activities that the entity will undertake in order to achieve its purposes.	15, 40
Operating context		
PGPA Rule 16E(4)(a)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include the environment in which the entity will operate.	20
PGPA Rule 16E(4)(b)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include the strategies and plans the entity will implement to have the capability it needs to undertake its key activities and achieve its purposes.	28
PGPA Rule 16E(4)(c)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include a summary of the risk oversight and management systems of the entity, and the key risks that the entity will manage and how those risks will be managed.	33
PGPA Rule 16E(4)(d)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include details of any organisation or body that will make a significant contribution towards achieving the entity's purposes through cooperation with the entity, including how that cooperation will help achieve those purposes.	37
PGPA Rule 16E(4)(e)	For the entire period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include how any subsidiary of the entity will contribute to achieving the entity's purposes.	N/A
Performance		
PGPA Rule 16E(5)(a)	For each reporting period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include details of how the entity's performance in achieving the entity's purposes will be measured and assessed through specified performance measures for the entity that meet the requirements of section 16EA.	43
PGPA Rule 16E(5)(b)	For each reporting period covered by the plan, the corporate plan must include specified targets for each of those performance measures for which it is reasonably practicable to set a target.	43