



Australian Government



Permitted take

Limits on water use are an integral part of implementing the Basin Plan. Sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) came into effect on 1 July 2019, transitioning to a new system of managing water in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Permitted take is the volume of water that was expected to be used in a water year (July to June) given the climate and water availability of that year. It is assessed at the end of the water year and based on the management rules and assumptions about water user behaviour given the climate conditions of that year.

 **Sustainable diversion limits are** how much water, on average, can be used in the Basin by towns, communities, industry and farmers, while keeping the rivers and environment healthy. These limits consider climate, trade, usage patterns and development of infrastructure.

 **Permitted take** is how much water was expected to be used under the SDL, based on the climate and water patterns of that water year. Permitted take is not the same as water allocated or legally accessible for take.

 **Actual take** is how much water was actually intercepted or used in the SDL resource unit in a given water year. It is measured or estimated.

Methods of determining permitted take

The Basin Plan requires Basin states to prepare water resource plans that include methods for determining annual permitted take. The Basin Plan describes a range of matters the method should consider such as water allocations, return flows and water trade.

In a regulated river the method to estimate permitted take usually uses a river model. Other forms of take may not be modelled but use other methods such as estimations based on the best available information.

Key facts

There's a limit to the amount of water that can be taken from the rivers for towns, industries and agriculture in the Murray-Darling Basin.



The aim of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is to establish a **productive and healthy Basin**.



There are **limits that guide how much water can be used in each area of the Basin**.

These limits consider climate, trade, usage patterns and development of infrastructure.



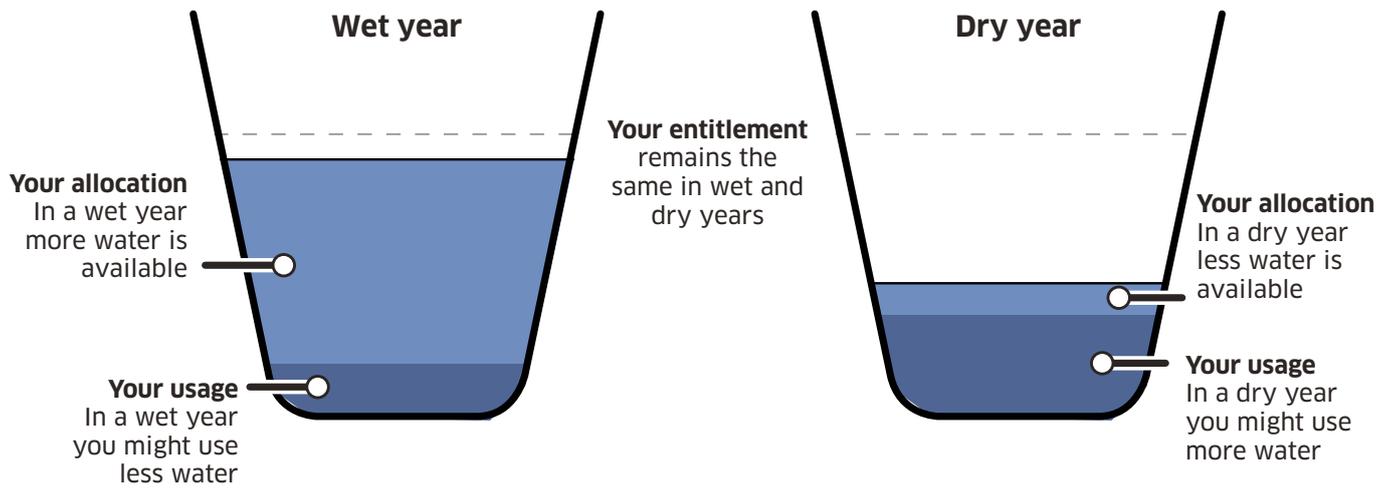
Variability in weather, demand and storage levels causes the annual 'actual take' to vary widely from year to year.



Water resource plans are key to ensuring **sustainable diversion limits are not exceeded over time**.



The Murray-Darling Basin Cap on Surface Water Diversions (the Cap) is the long-term limits on how much water could be taken from rivers in 24 designated river valleys.



Examples of variations in water allocations versus entitlements in a wet and dry year.

How is permitted take related to the SDL

Permitted take is an annualised expression of the SDL volume as defined in the Basin Plan. The method used to calculate annual permitted take is tested against the historical climate conditions. The historical climate period from 1895 to 2009 represents a range of climate conditions including extreme climatic events such as major floods in the 1950s and 1970s and the Federation and Millennium droughts in the 1900s and 2000s. When averaged over this historical period, the annual permitted take should be less than or equal to the long-term SDL.

Annual variability in permitted take volumes provides for flexible management by allowing the annual permitted take to be above the SDL in some years (i.e. when there is high water availability and demand) and lower in other years (i.e. when there is low water availability or demand).

Calculating compliance with SDLs

The Basin Plan requires Basin state governments to manage the use of water within SDLs.

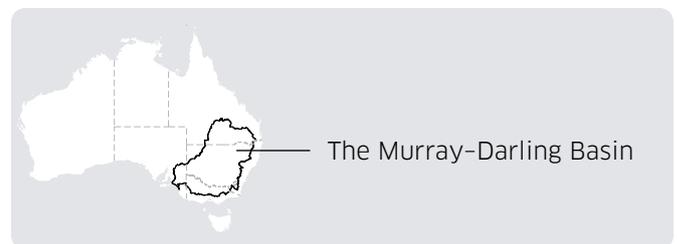
Complying with SDLs is based on the concepts of actual take and permitted take. The volume of water extracted during a water year from an SDL water resource unit is the annual actual take, and the volume that is expected to be extracted during a water year is the annual permitted take – both are calculated after the end of the water year and account for the climate of the year. Under both the Cap and SDL, credits and debits can be accumulated. A credit is recorded for a given year if water use was less than the annual use limit. A debit is recorded if water use was more than the annual use limit. Each year the credits/debits, are added to those from the previous year and so can build up over time.

Over time, a cumulative balance accrues based on each year's credit or debit. If the cumulative balance exceeds a debit of 20% or more of the SDL for that source, the compliance trigger has been breached and the State Government has the option to submit an explanation (reasonable excuse) and must return the cumulative balance to compliance.

Water lawfully accessible for take

Water allocated and available through legal means is known as 'water lawfully accessible for take'. This is the amount of water each state allocates to entitlement holders or can be legally accessed under water use rules.

Annual permitted take volume is different to the water lawfully accessible for take under Basin state water legislation as it relates to use rather than entitlements or allocations. Accredited water resource plans, set out the rules Basin states will use to ensure actual take does not exceed the permitted take.



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