

COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL WATER OFFICE

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COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL WATER OUTCOMES

HEADLINE STATEMENTS

- Commonwealth environmental watering is part of the long-term Basin Plan reform. This means broad scale results will take many years to fully emerge.
- Nonetheless, there are positive signs that environmental water is achieving its major goal of improving environments in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- We are investing over \$30 million under the Long Term Intervention Monitoring Project, bringing together some of Australia's leading regional universities, scientific research institutions and state agencies. All monitoring results are published on the CEWO website.
- Results from this monitoring is showing that environmental water is achieving outcomes across the Basin against a range of ecological indicators at the local scale and that we are creating the types of flow events expected to lead to beneficial environmental outcomes at the broad scale.

KEY FACTS AND RESPONSES

- Since 2009, 8,053 billion litres of Commonwealth environmental water has been delivered to achieve outcomes for fish, waterbirds, vegetation and river health across the Murray-Darling Basin including, over the last 12 months:
 - reconnecting over 2,000 km of river systems across the northern Basin in autumn 2018 to support stressed native fish species
 - supporting the re-establishment of native fish species including black bream into the Murray estuary, and the endangered eel tail catfish in the Wakool River *correcting ✓*
 - providing a large coordinated flow in winter 2017 that supported vegetation communities along the Goulburn River and went on to stimulate the largest recorded migration of pouched lamprey up through the Murray Mouth
 - providing flows through autumn 2017 and 2018 to benefit approximately 50,000 conservation stocked endangered silver perch in the Namoi River



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- inundating around 20,000 hectares of the Macquarie Marshes in winter-spring 2017 in support of over 50 species of native waterbirds, including the endangered Australian painted snipe and Australasian bittern
- supporting consecutive years of Murray cod spawning events in the Darling River during spring 2016 and 2017, the former recorded as one of the largest cod spawning events in the Murray in the last 20 years
- providing wetland habitat to support the breeding cycles for hundreds of thousands of waterbirds, including the first ever recorded breeding of pelicans at Nimmie-Caira with some 6,000 nests recorded in May 2017
- inundating significant areas of stressed black box tree communities over winter-spring 2017 as part of the largest managed watering of the iconic Hattah Lakes Ramsar site
- supporting the recovery of perennial wetland vegetation in the Mid-Murrumbidgee Wetlands over winter-spring 2017 as part of the largest environmental water delivery in the Murrumbidgee River system since 2012
- supporting the recovery of keystone vegetation species in the Coorong where flows in early 2017 resulted in the highest recorded coverage of aquatic plant *Ruppia tuberosa* since the Millennium Drought
- exporting over half a million tonnes of salt from the Murray River Channel, Lower Lakes, and Murray Mouth in 2016-17

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Under the Basin Plan, scientific experts expect it will take more than a decade from the start of flow delivery before large-scale changes become evident. Detecting these changes will require both time and high-quality monitoring data.
- Commonwealth environmental water is also only a relatively small proportion of what once flowed through these systems. The CEWO currently holds entitlements that are equivalent to less than 6% of average system inflows (the rainfall that makes it into the river system).
- This is not enough water to restore natural flow patterns. Along with other constraints, such as the pressure to keep water off floodplains, this means that the CEWO and water delivery partners need to be extremely selective about where, when and how water is delivered for environmental benefits.
- Within these constraints, and with the relatively small amount of water held, the CEWO is continuing to implement innovative approaches to water delivery based on cutting edge science and local knowledge in order to maximise environmental outcomes.