

## Let's set the record straight on easing constraints

MDBA Chief Executive Andrew McCarville explains how the flooding crisis has been used to scaremonger on the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

[Basin Plan](#) [Executive](#) [Flood](#)



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Chief Executive

Andrew commenced as Chief Executive in June 2022. With 3 decades of environmental resource management, he has held leadership roles, both domestic and international, across a range of sectors including natural resources.

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The devastating widespread flooding impacting large parts of the Murray-Darling Basin unfortunately has been used to scaremonger about the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. While we deeply understand the difficulties faced by communities, I feel it's important to set the record straight.

There have been assertions by some that this kind of flooding will occur more often if the Basin Plan is implemented in full – including a key element, known as 'easing constraints'. This is untrue.

Prior to the Basin Plan, for 100 years, the Murray River was essentially managed as a pipeline to support towns and irrigated agriculture.

A river is more than a pipeline, it lives and breathes and connects with its floodplain and the people who have relied on life-giving water for tens of thousands of years.

In part, the Basin Plan is trying to recreate this natural rhythm of our rivers by easing the constraints to the natural flow of water onto floodplains and wetlands. Put simply, it means removing low level bridges and other impediments to allow the river to connect with its floodplain more easily. Low lying areas along our rivers, including some private properties, will get wet more often.

Importantly, relaxed constraints do not lead to widespread natural flooding like what we are seeing across parts of the Basin right now. Instead, at times when water for the environment is being used, rivers will be kept below minor flood level to minimise impacts on communities who live and work alongside them.

State and federal environmental water holders will work together to coordinate how they use their water to generate system-wide environmental benefits within acceptable river flows.

Relaxed constraints will allow minor floods to be better managed with less impacts on infrastructure and communities.

We understand and appreciate how hard these projects are to implement. State governments must negotiate with thousands of landholders and as far as we are aware no agreements have been signed.

Governments have a massive task, and nobody is shying away from the fact it's a tough job to get everyone on the same page.

But we must not lose sight of the bigger picture, here. These critically important projects will achieve the environmental outcomes that will benefit us all, now and into the future. It also means keeping more water in the consumptive pool for irrigators.

### Related information

- [Constraints are part of the SDLAM projects](#)
- [New South Wales Reconnecting River Country](#)
- [Victorian Constraints Measures Program](#)

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