

SA River Murray Flow Report



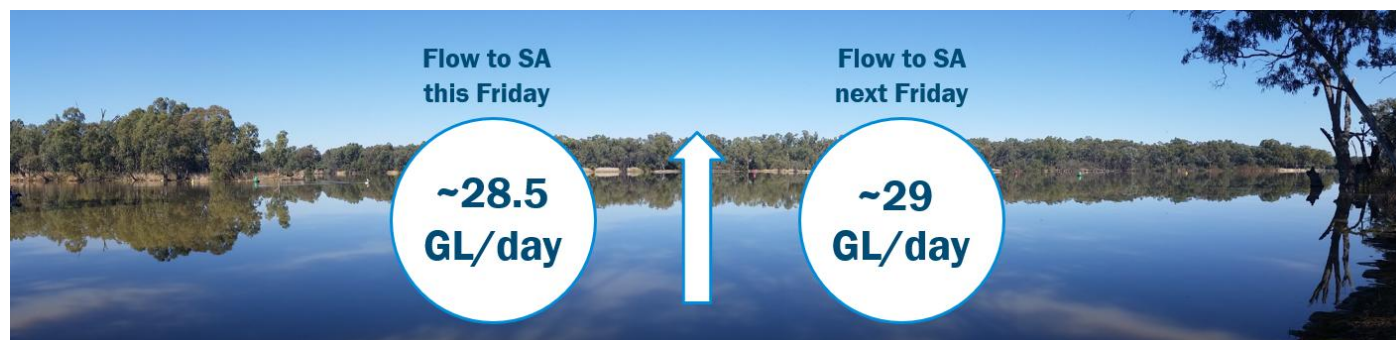
Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water

Report #38/2026

Issued 10:00am 18 Sept 2026

This supersedes all previous Flow Reports issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW).

Flow outlook



The flow at the South Australian border this Friday is approximately 28.5 GL/day and is forecast to increase to around 29 GL/day by next Friday.

The flow at the South Australian border includes September Entitlement Flow (4.5 GL/day) and environmental return flow from upstream watering events. An unregulated flow event resulting from significant tributary inflows below storages in Victoria and NSW is providing the majority of additional water. The unregulated flow event which commenced on 8 July 2026, continues to deliver additional 'Planned Environmental Water' to South Australia. This unregulated flow event is forecast to continue throughout September.

The flow over Lock 1 this Friday is approximately 25 GL/day and is forecast to remain steady at around 25 GL/day next Friday.

It is important to note that flow forecasts in this advice are based on the information available at the time of preparation. Advice may change due to operational changes at Lake Victoria and upstream Locks as unregulated flow works its way to the South Australian Border. Environmental watering actions and further rainfall may also change the flow outlook.

Upstream flows, rainfall and storages

Over the past week, rainfall across the Murray Darling Basin was generally light and concentrated across the southern Basin, with much of the northern and central Basin remaining dry.

Rainfall across Victoria, southern New South Wales and the southern Murray catchments, was fairly widespread, but generally around 1 to 10mm, with pockets of 10 to 15mm and some isolated areas receiving 15 to 25 mm. Large areas of inland New South Wales and Queensland within the Basin recorded little or no rainfall. Rainfall through late June and into early July resulted in a number of tributaries in New South Wales and Victoria generating significant flows into the River Murray. An unregulated flow event commenced on 8 July from Wentworth to the South Australian border and is still ongoing.

Further rainfall through August generated continued inflows to the Upper Murray storages and additional inflow from the Victorian tributaries to the Murray. The Victorian tributaries enter the Murray below Dartmouth and Hume Dams, and with Lake Victoria near capacity, there is limited ability for this water to be regulated and stored.

For South Australia, rainfall was also generally light, with around 1 to 5mm recorded across much of the River Murray corridor, Adelaide region and the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth, increasing to around 5 to 10mm in parts of the southern Murraylands.

Further rainfall information for the Basin can be found at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/maps/rainfall/>

The current unregulated flow is forecast to persist throughout September and will be dependent on further rainfall events. Flow continues to travel towards the South Australian Border and further information will continue to be provided in subsequent flow reports.

Under the Water Allocation Plan for the River Murray Prescribed Watercourse, unregulated flow is classified as 'Planned Environmental Water'. This is water that is preserved for environmental outcomes and cannot be used for any other purpose. As of 16 September 2026, Dartmouth Dam storage has increased to 2,957 GL, which is approximately 77% of capacity, and Hume Dam storage has increased to 2,594 GL, approximately 86% of capacity. Storage in the Menindee Lakes has gradually receded to 501 GL, approximately 29% of capacity. Menindee Lakes storage goes into NSW control when the volume falls below 480 GL and does not return to a shared storage until the volume rises back above 640 GL. Lake Victoria has remained close to capacity at 645 GL, which is 95% capacity. Releases from Lake Victoria are currently contributing to approximately 2% of the flow to South Australia.

Flows at the South Australian border have gradually increased again and averaged 25.6 GL/day over the past week to 16 September.

This forecast remains subject to change, depending on river operations and catchment rainfall. More information on upstream conditions and forecasts can be found in the [Murray-Darling Basin Authority's Weekly Flow Report](#).

Water quality

Algal blooms within SA

Coorong

Monitoring for *Karenia* continues across the South Australian coast and at the Coorong. For algal bloom water testing results and further information visit [Algal Bloom Water Sampling Dashboard](#).

For current conditions and health advice please visit the [SA Government algal bloom website](#) or the [SA Health water quality alerts page](#).

Algal blooms upstream of SA

WaterNSW issues blue-green algae (BGA) alerts as red, amber or green. A red alert indicates a toxic algal bloom, making the water dangerous for humans and animals; an amber alert indicates BGA may be multiplying in numbers and water should be considered unsuitable for human or animal consumption but remains suitable for recreational use; and a green alert indicates the presence of BGA but not at levels to pose a threat to recreational, stock or domestic use.

WaterNSW has advised of green recreational blue green algae alerts along the River Murray from Buronga to Lock 8. Numerous alerts also remain in place across the combined Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling River, including red alerts at Lake Menindee and Cawndilla and at Burtundy, and amber alerts at Lake Wetherell, Copi Hollow and at several locations along the Lower Darling.

Victoria's Goulburn-Murray Water has an active red alert for Lake Eildon and the Murray Valley Irrigation Area 9/1P channel. Details of the current VIC alert locations can be found on the [Blue-Green Algae Warnings - Goulburn Murray Water](#) page.

Various low to mid-level recreational BGA alerts remain current on the River Murray from Boundary Bend through to Lock 9. Details of LMW alert locations can be found on the [Blue-green algae monitoring - Lower Murray Water](#) page.

Water for the environment delivery

During September, water for the environment will arrive at the South Australian border as return flows from a watering action in the Murrumbidgee. There is also around 200 ML/day of water for the environment arriving from the Darling River. The bulk of the flow entering South Australia in September will be unregulated (or unmanaged) flow resulting from rainfall upstream. A 'directed release' watering action is in place which makes a small volume of water for the environment available from Lake Victoria to manage flows to South Australia during this unregulated flow event. This action will provide water to low lying floodplains and wetlands in South Australia. Water for the environment also continues to be delivered as part of SA's Entitlement flow.

Planning for delivery of water for the environment throughout 2026-27 remains in progress. A mid to high level operation of the floodplain regulators at Katarapko is in progress with water levels continuing to increase over the coming weeks, along with a 30 cm raising of Lock 4. The watering at Katarapko will continue throughout spring.

Raising of the Pike floodplain environmental regulators commenced this week, targeting a low-level watering event with water levels reaching up to 0.85 m above the usual pool level. This will provide soil moisture to support native plants and floodplain trees at low elevation wetlands and low-lying parts of the floodplain. It will also provide additional foraging habitat for waterbirds and cues for frog breeding. Lock 5 will be raised by up to 50 cm to support the floodplain watering event once the current works at the lock are completed in October.

Weir pool raising by 50 cm above normal pool level at Lock 2 is anticipated to commence during September. Locks 1, 3 and 6 will be operated within normal operating range.

These environmental watering operations are aimed at supporting further recovery of floodplain vegetation health and providing important habitat for frogs, fish, waterbirds and a range of other biota. Proposed operations remain subject to water availability and relevant approvals.

Murray Mouth

Dredging is continuing to take place in the Tauwiche Channel and Goolwa Channel adjacent to Youngusband Peninsula.

Barrage releases, combined with dredging throughout most of the year, help to maintain flow connectivity of the River Murray Channel to the Murray Mouth and assist in exporting salt from the river system.

Exclusion Zones established around the dredging operations are in place to ensure public safety.

Barrage operations and water levels in the Lower Lakes

As of 16 September 2026, the water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.74 m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.69 m AHD, noting that lake levels can fluctuate considerably depending on wind conditions.

Lake Alexandrina is managed, as far as practicable, to target a daily average lake level between 0.7 m AHD and 0.8 m AHD throughout September.

Barrage gate operations are adjusted to release water when tidal conditions permit and are dependent on upstream flows, lake levels and variable weather conditions.

Gate closures are undertaken to mitigate the impact of saltwater ingress into Lake Alexandrina and the Goolwa Channel. A reverse head means that water cannot be physically discharged as the water level on the

downstream side of the barrages is higher than that on the upstream side of the barrages. Gates are operated around high tides and prevailing conditions to discharge water when the conditions permit.

Additional gates are currently open due to unregulated flow arriving at Lake Alexandrina. Gate operations will be adapted to maintain the target lake level and deliver water to the Murray Estuary and Coorong as the unregulated flow arrives. Gate openings at the barrages can now be viewed on [Water Data SA – Barrage dashboard](#).

Total daily flow releases from the barrages can also be found on [Water Data SA – Flows dashboard](#).

River Murray vessel waste disposal stations (RVWDS)

Pontoon works at Renmark, Loxton and Morgan RVWDS are now complete, with all three stations operational again.

RVWDS upgrade works

We will be undertaking construction works from early September to upgrade river vessel waste disposal infrastructure near Lock 3 and Lock 6.

Key dates

These RVWDS will be **CLOSED** during the below dates, while works are undertaken*:

- Lock 6 RVWDS: Week starting 7 September 2026 – March 2027
- Lock 3 RVWDS: 4 October 2026 (decommissioned)

** Dates are weather dependent and subject to change.*

Temporary pump-out stations

While works occur, alternative pump-out services will be available by contacting **Riverland Tank and Drain Cleaners on (08) 8102 0998**. Please provide as much advance notice of your pump-out needs as possible.

Station	Minimum notice time	Temporary pump-out site
Lock 3	4 hours	View on maps
Lock 6	4 hours	View on maps

For more information about Lock 3 and 6 works please email SAconstraints@sa.gov.au or see the RVWDS webpage linked below.

For a full list and map of the stations visit: <http://environment.sa.gov.au/waste-disposal-stations>

You can report any RVWDS issues on 1800 799 065.

If you have any questions, please contact the DEW WIO Engagement Team at DEW.WIOCommunications@sa.gov.au

Salinity

Salinity levels throughout the River Murray in South Australia are within their typical range. Nonetheless, it is possible that some irrigators may record higher salinity readings at isolated locations. These higher readings are more likely to be observed at the bottom of the water column.

Higher salinity may be observed in the Goolwa Channel and the direct upstream vicinity of the Barrages as a result of reverse head conditions. Water users are recommended to monitor salinity at their extraction points in these locations.

Irrigators are encouraged to monitor the [daily salinity levels](#) provided by SA Water as part of their business operations.

Intermediate remediation of the LMRIA levees project

As intermediate works on eight Government owned LMRIA levees near completion, the project is on track to progressively reopen all government owned levees by the end of the year, subject to inspections and any necessary safety works, with private levees scheduled for completion by March 2027.

Intermediate remediation works update:

- Burdett and Long Flat levees have now reopened to the public.
- Construction works at Toora, Neeta and Cowirra are complete.
- Construction works are underway at the Westbrook, Wellington, and Swanport levees.
- Contracts for the remaining private levees have been awarded.

Government levees in the LMRIA (except Burdett and Long Flat) remain temporarily closed to the public.

Where intermediate remediation works are still required, levees will remain closed until works are complete, to ensure safe access.

Public safety risk assessments, including tree condition assessments, have now been completed across all levees. Fencing repairs are ongoing, with signage to be reinstated prior to reopening. Arborist works will be scheduled for remaining levees, subject to suitable weather conditions.

The Intermediate Remediation of the LMRIA Levees project is jointly funded by the Australian and South Australian governments, through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This project will return the severely flood damaged sections of government and private levees to their pre-flood height.

For more information, including locations and access updates, please visit the [LMRIA levees page](#).

If you have any questions, please contact the DEW Levee Recovery Team at DEW.lmrialevees@sa.gov.au

Further information

• Algal bloom information	Bureau of Meteorology forecasts
Other flow updates and information	• SA rainfall and river conditions
• Current SA daily water levels	• Victorian rainfall and river conditions
• SA Water daily flow report	• NSW rainfall and river conditions
• SA Water daily salinity report	• Climate outlooks
• SA Water daily river graphs	• Climate drivers
• Murray-Darling Basin Authority weekly report	• Long-range forecast
• Real Time Water Data (DEW)	Further information
• Live river system data (MDBA)	• Murray-Darling Basin Authority news
• SA Health water quality alerts	• Water for the environment actions by region
Mapping	• NSW algal alerts
• River Murray inundation mapping	• Government of SA - State Disaster Recovery
• 2014 River Murray floodplain flood mapping	• SA Marine safety
• Flood awareness mapping	• Weir pool manipulation
• Algal bloom information	• 2022-23 River Murray Flood event

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