SDLAM – Overview

Video Script

The Murray–Darling Basin is the largest and most complex river system in Australia.

It covers one million square kilometres across Queensland, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and South Australia.

The Basin needs a plan to make it healthier and more sustainable, while continuing to support communities, farming and other industries.

At its heart, the Murray–Darling Basin Plan sets the amount of water that can be taken from the Basin in an average year, while leaving enough for our rivers, lakes and wetlands and the plants and animals that depend on them.

Communities across the Basin swim in, fish in, camp on, travel along and depend on our rivers on a daily basis.

Maintaining a healthy Basin and rivers continues to support our communities and the people who live and breathe their local rivers.

The gap between what was taken for consumptive use before the Basin Plan – and what the rivers need to stay healthy was 2750 gigalitres – this is known as ‘gap bridging’ water.

This was the water recovery target. The Basin Plan includes mechanisms to adjust the water recovery target.

In the northern Basin the Northern Basin review found that 70 gigalitres of the north’s 2750 gigalitre ‘gap bridging’ target could stay in productive use if a range of environmental projects was undertaken.

These measures make up the Northern Basin Toolkit.

In the southern Basin the mechanism is called the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism or SDLAM for short.

There are 36 SDLAM projects identified to achieve environmental outcomes using less water.

Together, the projects nominated by the states are estimated to reduce the water recovery target by 605 gigalitres in the southern Basin.

There are two types of SDLAM projects:

‘Supply Projects’ - that build or improve river management structures or improve river operating rules to get better outcomes and

‘Constraints Projects’ - that allow higher flows to be released, increasing the flexibility of river operations to get better  outcomes. They need to form agreement with landholders and may require an upgrade to infrastructure.

Supply Projects include investing in upgrading locks and weirs, constructing pump stations, regulators, levy banks and fishways to improve the efficiency of water used to help the environment.

Constraints Projects improve the delivery of water for the environment by changing rules and investing in changes to infrastructure like easements, crossings, culverts or bridges to address potential impacts to individual landowners. These improve the effectiveness of water used to help the environment.

Together these projects help keep more water in productive use so our farmers can plant more crops, creating more regional jobs and supporting the lives and lifestyles of over 2.6 million Australians who call the Basin home.

To find out more, visit our website.