

Environment:

Fighting for the Murray

For the Future



Acknowledgment of country.

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians whose ancestral lands we live and work upon and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their deep spiritual connection and the relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Country. We also pay our respects to the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their nations in South Australia, as well as those across Australia.

Foreword

The River Murray is often called the lifeblood of South Australia, and for good reason. Much of our state's wealth and environmental sustainability come from the river. Yet it is constantly at risk, its mouth is only kept open by constant dredging and it therefore deserves the closest attention from the South Australian government.

Labor in government will make the River Murray a priority for South Australia again.

The threats to the health of the River Murray in South Australia and to the Murray-Darling Basin are many. The water from the system is over-allocated in much of the Basin. The Australian government has abandoned any leadership role in delivering the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Eastern states' governments are reluctant to deliver water efficiency projects to free up water for South Australia. Extraordinarily, climate change science is not accounted for in the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Worst of all, the Marshall Liberal Government has failed to stand up for South Australia's interests, and was found by the Murray-Darling Royal Commission to have acted in a way that was "antipathetic to the interests of South Australia".

Labor remains committed to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and will do everything in our power to deliver it, and to strengthen it for the future sustainability of South Australia.

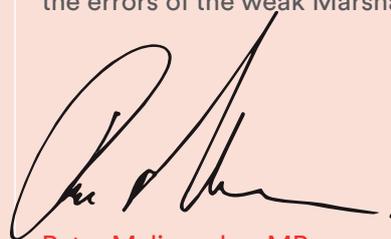
- 1 Labor will act on every recommendation of the Murray-Darling Royal Commission 2019.
- 2 Labor will reverse the Marshall Liberal government endorsement of complex criteria restricting the funding of water efficiency projects up-river.
- 3 Labor will engage with Aboriginal people on their water needs and interests.
- 4 Labor will appoint an eminent jurist to be the Commissioner for the River Murray in SA. The Commissioner will report annually to parliament, will deal with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, will advise the government and will be someone who irrigators, environmentalists and communities can work with on their challenges in water management. (\$2m over four years.)
- 5 Labor will prepare for legal action to defend our water rights against the inaction and negligence of the Australian and eastern states' governments'.

6 Labor will take these demands to the Australian Government and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and:

- ▶ Appoint a South Australian to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority Board
- ▶ Replace the former National Party member of parliament as Inspector General of Water Compliance with an expert with no political affiliations.
- ▶ Instigate an immediate scientific review of the water necessary to be allocated to South Australia given the latest in climate science.
- ▶ Ensure that the Australian government takes responsibility for the delivery of the 450GL for South Australia's end of the River Murray in the face of eastern states' refusal to cooperate in its delivery. (Though voluntary water buy-back if necessary.)
- ▶ Remove the Barnaby Joyce cap on voluntary water sales by willing sellers to achieve environmental flows in the Plan.
- ▶ Adopt all other relevant recommendations of the Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission

No government in Australia will care for the South Australian end of the River Murray if the South Australian government does not. If we capitulate to the interests of up river water users, we abrogate our responsibilities to our river and to our water users.

Labor will not make that mistake and we will correct the errors of the weak Marshall Liberal government.



Peter Malinauskas MP
SA Labor Leader



Susan Close MP
Deputy SA Labor Leader





EXPLAINER:

The Murray-Darling Basin Plan

What the Basin needs to be sustainable

3900-7600GL

What SA was forced to accept

3200GL

What the eastern states think is enough

2750GL

What has been delivered

2107GL

What about the 450GL?

SA insisted on an additional 450GL to come down the Murray-Darling Basin to keep the whole system healthy.

Only 1.9GL has been delivered and no serious scientist or observer believes the 450GL will ever arrive.

What went wrong:

Marshall capitulation

The Marshall Liberal government capitulated to eastern states' interests and agreed to complex criteria making it harder to get water efficiency projects approved for the 450GL.

NSW refusal

NSW has stated it does not intend to approve any more projects to achieve the 450GL goal.

Commonwealth hostile actions

National Party ministers in Canberra have repeatedly undermined the likelihood of getting the 450GL, and have recently ruled out any water efficiency projects on farms to deliver it.

THE MIGHTY RIVER MURRAY:

Essential yet neglected and under threat

The River Murray at 2508 kilometres long is Australia's longest river. It spans New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. Almost 2000 km is navigable, making it the third longest navigable river on the planet, with only the Amazon and Nile rivers ahead of it. It is, however, a slow moving river, passing only as much water in a year as the Amazon does in a day.

The River Murray provides water to about 1.5 million households, as well as farms and other businesses along its length.

The Coorong and Lakes Albert and Alexandrina are designated as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

Lake Albert in the millennium drought



The Murray Mouth requires dredging 365 days a year.

Source: The Times, Victor Harbor



The ecosystem

The Basin contains a variety of unique and delicate ecosystems with plants and animals that aren't found anywhere else in the world. This includes 120 waterbird species, more than 50 native fish species, and 16 internationally recognised and protected wetlands.

Tree roots hold the banks of the river together, stopping erosion and allowing the river to flow and function as it should.

Wetlands help with water quality. When water from rivers overflows, wetland plants absorb excess nitrogen and phosphorous, preventing these chemicals from poisoning fish and damaging crops.

Without water, plants and animals in many ecosystems will die.

Fish deaths become more likely. Less water means algal blooms and blackwater events are more likely. Less water also means the concentration of salt and toxic chemicals increases.

Wetlands die without water. Areas that are unique to Australia, including those that are internationally recognised for their diversity and uniqueness, dry out.

Birds and fish can't breed as their breeding habitats dry out.

When the environment suffers, people suffer too.

Too much salt in the water can make water too salty for drinking or watering crops, and can poison the land.

When toxic chemicals enter the river system because of acid sulphate soils the water isn't safe for drinking, irrigation or recreation.

Algal blooms can be toxic to people as well as plants and animals.¹



1. Why the health of the rivers is important | Murray-Darling Basin Authority (mdba.gov.au)

Six point action plan on the River Murray

Only a Labor Government will stand up for the health of the River Murray, including the Lower Lakes, Murray Mouth and the Coorong. Capitulating to other states, as a Royal Commission found the Liberals did, does nothing for the River Murray, nothing for SA irrigators and nothing for the environmental health of the our river system.

Labor remains committed to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and will do everything in our power to deliver it, and to strengthen it for the future sustainability of South Australia.

- 1 Labor will act on every recommendation of the Murray-Darling Royal Commission 2019.
- 2 Labor will reverse the Marshall Liberal government's endorsement of complex criteria restricting the funding of water efficiency projects up-river.
- 3 Labor will engage with Aboriginal people on their water needs and interests.
- 4 Labor will appoint an eminent jurist to be the Commissioner for the River Murray in SA. The Commissioner will report annually to parliament, will deal with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, will advise the government and will be someone who irrigators, environmentalists and communities can work with on their challenges in water management. (\$2m over four years.)
- 5 Labor will prepare for legal action to defend our water rights against the inaction and negligence of the Australian and eastern states' governments'.
- 6 Labor will take these demands to the Australian Government and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority and:
 - ▶ Appoint a South Australian to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority Board.
 - ▶ Replace the former National Party member of parliament as Inspector General of Water Compliance with an expert with no political affiliations.
 - ▶ Instigate an immediate scientific review of the water necessary to be allocated to South Australia given the latest in climate science.
 - ▶ Ensure that the Australian government is responsible for the delivery of the 450GL for South Australia's end of the River Murray in the face of eastern states' refusal to cooperate in its delivery. (Though voluntary water buy-back if necessary.)
 - ▶ Remove the Barnaby Joyce cap on voluntary water sales by willing sellers to achieve environmental flows in the Plan.
 - ▶ Adopt all other relevant recommendations of the Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission.

