# Project fact sheet

## Water futures

## What is the water futures project?

The water futures project brings together community, industry and university researchers to support community action to enhance water security and support adaptation to more variability in water supply in the Murray–Darling Basin.

### Key points

Water futures links research to action in the Murray–Darling Basin by:

- working collaboratively with four communities across the basin on local ideas for making the most of available water into the future
- demonstrating local solutions to water scarcity
- building knowledge together about how communities can effecively adapt to living with less water
- developing practical case studies which can be used by any community wanting to work together on the ways water is used and understood locally into the future.

### The challenge

It is likely that climate change will mean less water is available across the Murray–Darling Basin into the future. With less water, community life along with industry, culture and ecosystem health is threatened.

Communities play a vital role in the way water is used, valued and understood. Local knowledge, experience and skills are at the centre of adaption to future water use, custodianship and understanding.

The challenge for this project is to support, demonstrate and build knowledge about how best to connect local community action with long-term water adaptation to guarantee thriving and sustainable life across the basin for everyone.

### The opportunity

An opportunity exists to connect and mobilise community knowledge, experience, skills and commitment to demonstrate and build knowledge about what is possible for local place-based action on water futures.This project provides a timely and practical way for community knowledge and action to contribute to water adaptation planning across the basin. As climate change impacts are more deeply felt, water futures offers guidance and processes for successful water adaptation designed by communities and connected to local priorities. This learning can then be used by communities across the basin to design water adaption from the ground up.

### Our research

This is an action research project which means that community members are co-researchers with academics, First Nations groups, industry partners, local government and other stakeholders, and together we build knowledge through local action on water.

Building on existing relationships and knowledge, action research ensures new learning is

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immediately available to communities to refine and improve initiatives over the life of the project.

The research is co-designed with community members and research impacts include building knowledge about how communities can effectively adapt to changing water availability, demonstrating ideas in practice which can be taken up by communities over time, and practical, on the ground action which supports thriving communities able to adapt to changing water availability.

## Outcomes

- This project will provide the ideas, strategies and experience to enable communities to accelerate adaptation to futures likely to feature highly variable water availability and at times, high levels of water scarcity.
- Key agencies and community groups will have increased knowledge and confidence to support adaptation initiatives.
- Case studies produced by the project will document critical learning from four communities across the Murray–Darling Basin regarding how to effectively build and support local social infrastructure to conserve, plan for, and use water in the context of reduced and increasingly variable water availability over time.
- At a local level, practical engagement in action on the ground and knowledge building in each of the four communities will support ongoing work in local government, local human service organisations/NGOs, community organisations, industry networks, First Nations groups and natural resource management organisations and networks.
- Regionally and basin-wide, the project will provide new knowledge building on the work of the government agencies and other bodies working on regional economic development.

## Next steps

Stage one of the project is underway. We are currently connecting with communities across the basin and keen to hear from anyone interested in joining the project.

Local water futures initiatives will commence in some locations during 2024.

### Key personnel

- Associate Professor Margot Rawsthorne
  University of Sydney
- Professor Amanda Howard
  University of Sydney

### Core partners

- Murray Darling Association
- Regional Development Australia, Murraylands and Riverland
- Murray–Darling Basin Authority
- Australian National University
- University of Melbourne

## One Basin CRC

Since our inception in mid-2022, the One Basin Cooperative Research Centre has brought together 85 partners across the Murray–Darling Basin.

Our purpose is to work together to grow value from water in a changing world.

From Queensland to South Australia, we are finding practical solutions to complex challenges, training the next generation of scientists, and nurturing regional communities.

Our collective goal is a productive, resilient and sustainable Murray–Darling Basin.

**For further information please contact:**
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