

Future governance for water limited communities

The Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) is facing a water limited future requiring effective governance that includes stakeholders and communities beyond those with formal authority. Understandings of what constitutes and defines effective governance remains contested and evolving.

This project aims to identify end-user driven forms, innovations and models of future governance that will address these issues.

Case studies will be used to co-develop new collectively aligned approaches to governance which can leverage past achievements, address persisting challenges and provide guidance for forthcoming policy, planning and implementation strategy reforms pertinent to the MDB.

Key points

Outcomes from this program will create better relationships, and increased collaboration, decision-making around shared values and useful, diverse and helpfully synthesized knowledge.

It will result in a collection of future models of governance, co-developed with end-users, which acknowledge trade-offs, and issues in governance while providing

incentives and models for change, that will enable the social license to govern.

Governments will be able to implement policy because it is better supported by stakeholders and communities.

First Nations groups will be able to establish pathways by which their interests are more inclusively represented.

The challenge

Governing the basin is highly complex and contested. We urgently need to improve decision-making under climate change and other uncertainties through engagement with and input of stakeholders with an interest in water management in the MDB.

Finding ways to navigate this complexity, conflict and coupled uncertainties, is the core challenge of effectively supporting productive and resilient social-ecological systems and communities across the basin into the future



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The opportunity

This project provides the opportunity for end users, First Nations and researchers to co-design models for river basin governance, especially as these relate to bottom-up approaches.

Longer-term impacts will include stronger governance partnerships, enhanced and climate-proofed governance framework, and deployment of innovations into formal and informal MDB governance

Our research

This project is based on the acknowledgement that first and foremost it is being conducted on First Nation country/ies. We will work consistently in partnership with relevant First Nations peoples.

The Project will be implemented via four work packages: (i) overview of governance for entire basin, (ii) governance case study of the Coorong, (iii) case study of Dubbo, (iv) development of innovative and new governance mechanisms.

The project will be co-led and designed by end users, and field work will be held in case study locations.

Outcomes

- A report that provides information about the types of governance in the MDB
- Production of best practice guidelines identifying conditions and options for integrated future governance and
- User led compendium of innovative and future governance approaches, including First Nations principles and governance

Next steps

This project will evaluate the successes and challenges of prior governance, to present new and innovative governance frameworks to address future challenges.

These models will acknowledge and include First Nations perspectives and ideas around governance.

The project will be used to inform the development of new projects that will trial and test the efficacy of these new models and to create future collaborations.

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.

Key personnel

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