

Across the levels

Sometimes the three separate levels of government in Australia are in **conflict**, with each wanting something different. For example, the federal government may want to distribute some money in a certain way to schools across Australia. Because schools are a state responsibility, the state governments may want to allocate the money in a different way.

Sometimes state or territory and federal governments need to work together for the greater good of the country. There are also many areas of shared responsibility.

The Murray–Darling Basin

The Murray–Darling Basin is Australia’s largest river system. The Basin covers more than one million square kilometres, with a total of 23 rivers. These rivers supply water to areas in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Many farming communities depend on the water from this system that is stored in dams and weirs. The management and sustainability of the Murray–Darling Basin is extremely important to the areas that rely on its water and to Australia as a country.



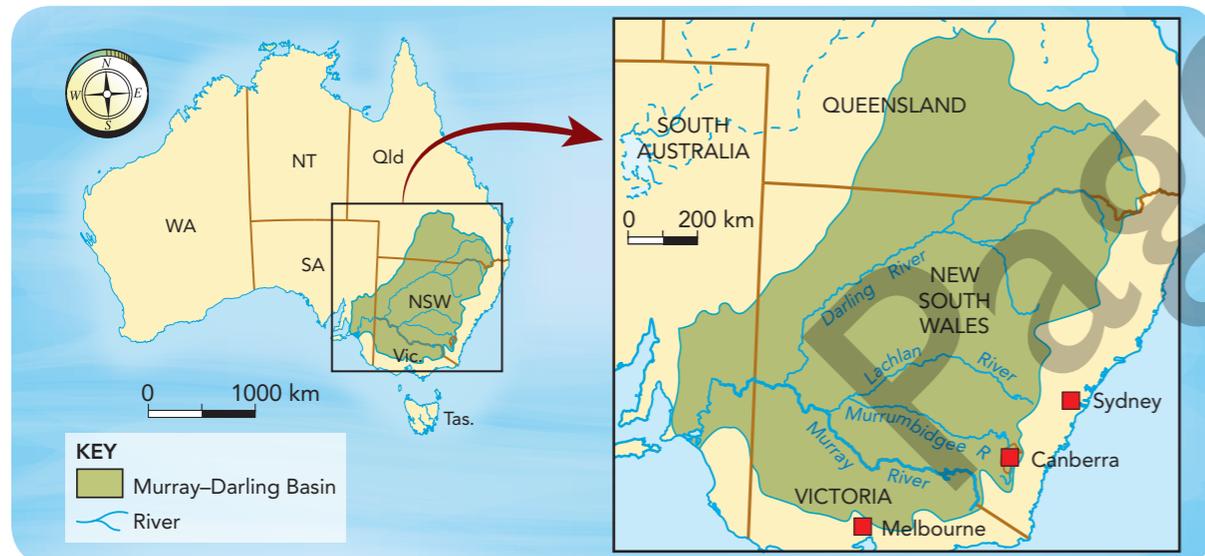
The Murray River is Australia’s longest river.

The water resources of the Murray–Darling Basin used to be managed by the individual states, with no real overall coordination. In 2007, the federal government passed the Water Act to coordinate the management. Then in 2008, the Water Amendment Act created the Murray–Darling Basin Authority to manage the water resources and create a plan for long-term sustainability.

Although it is a federal body, the authority works with state governments and local councils. The authority coordinates the management of the system, but the states look after dams and the actual water distribution in their areas.

There are a number of groups that advise the authority. The Murray–Darling Association represents more than 90 local government areas. The authority works with this association, as well as with the local councils regarding the water needs of their community.

One of the authority’s main tasks has been the development of the Basin Plan for future management and sustainability of the area. In developing this plan, the authority was advised by a special Ministerial Council, whose membership included one minister from each of the Basin states and territories.



The Murray–Darling Basin spreads across a vast area of south-eastern Australia.