

Murray and Mallee

The region's economy is based on primary production and value-adding for export. For irrigated development to continue to drive growth, it will require strategic use of water and provision of associated infrastructure. Other key issues include freight movement and reliability of the electricity supply. The region's natural resources, particularly the River Murray and its surrounds, will need to be managed in ways that address environmental concerns.

The Murray region and the river provide the life blood to most of our primary and value-adding industries. The uses that confront the region impact on the economic well being of all South Australia. Apart from its major economic activities it is a major recreational area for the state.



At a glance

Area	37,049 km ² (3.77 % of SA)
Population	66,998 (4.57% of SA)
Aged < 15	21.65% against SA average of 19.57%
Aged > 65	14.43% against SA average of 14.40%
Demographic trends	2016 projection: 66,596 Down 0.60% from 2001 (4.17% of SA) Slow decrease as youth move to the city for education and work
Natural Resources	River Murray, wetlands and lakes, native bush and national parks, Mallee Prescribed Wells Area
Key Industries	Based on primary production – dry land farming and horticulture (viticulture, fruit, nuts, vegetables) and related processing, wineries, manufacturing and tourism
Licensed airfields	Loxton, Renmark, Waikerie

Principal Industries

Agriculture

Agricultural production from this region exceeded \$1.3 billion in 2000/01.

The region has a high level of diversification, ranging from intensive horticulture and animal keeping to extensive cropping and livestock. The region's growth will depend upon the continued growth of the primary sector and the value-adding of primary products.

Near the river there is substantial irrigated horticulture, particularly viticulture, vegetables, citrus, stone fruits, nuts and olives. The region's economical use of water through efficient irrigation practices, and its suitable soils and favourable climate give it an advantage for the production of a range of agricultural products that has attracted large scale agribusiness investment.

Intensive animal keeping, particularly dairy production, pigs and poultry, is of importance.

Dryland areas are substantial producers of mixed farming products including grains, wool and meat.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is largely based on adding value to primary production via processing and packaging of fruit and vegetables, wine production, production of farming machinery and associated light engineering.

Tourism

The River Murray dominates the region. Apart from being the major source of water for the state, the River Murray is the main focus for recreation and tourism activities in the region. The Coorong National Park is the most noteworthy of a number of significant national parks and reserves that attract tourists.

The climate, an abundance of natural features and heritage, and the open space and tranquillity attract visitors from across Australia and overseas. Houseboat holidays are popular.

Mining

There are substantial deposits of mineral sands in the region. Geological surveys have highlighted potential for other minerals to be explored including gold, lead, zinc, iron ore, nickel, chromium, coal, granite, gypsum and diamonds.

Infrastructure

Energy



The electricity transmission system and distribution networks are privately owned and required to comply with minimum performance standards, such as strength and reliability of supply.

The Murraylands has three main connection systems at Mannum, Mobilong and Tailem Bend, and distribution is from the 33 kV sub-transmission network or via three distribution sub-stations. The Riverland has two main connection systems – at Berri and North West Bend – and supply is via nine distribution sub-stations.

The main energy demands are for water pumping through SA Water's pipelines and for irrigation and processing. Electricity extension and augmentation for new areas of agriculture, horticulture, mining and processing can require long lead times.

Gas is supplied to Murray Bridge and Berri from Envestra's Riverland transmission pipeline. Expansion of the natural gas and electricity networks is considered a priority for food processing and other manufacturing businesses planning to establish or expand operations.

The Riverland Development Corporation and local government have investigated extending gas reticulation to Loxton, Renmark and Waikerie to support the high-volume LPG users and value-adding activities. The SEA Gas line has a take-off point at Taillem Bend to enable supply for future industrial development.

Water



The River Murray is the largest single surface water resource in the state. The River Murray is a multi-use resource, with the major commercial and social uses being for irrigation and for urban and industrial supplies. It is also used for recreation and conservation and is the focus of the important tourism industry.

More effective use of the available water is occurring as irrigation practices improve and as water licensing and pricing arrangements allocate water to its highest and best use. Major initiatives are being undertaken to improve efficiency in water use and distribution, pollution control, and environmental rehabilitation and protection. Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and National Water Initiative reforms could lead to increased water trading and greater quantities able to be transferred to South Australia.

Salinity and quality of drinking water sourced from the River Murray are vital considerations. Safeguarding and improving water quality will continue to be a major strategic imperative.

Rising groundwater levels and dryland salinity remain the largest threats to flora and fauna and use of River Murray water for domestic, industrial and irrigation purposes.

Salt interception schemes are being constructed to intercept salt loads that would otherwise flow into the river. The schemes are vital to generating salinity credits, which the state needs to offset the impact of irrigation development since 1988 and to allow new development to proceed, as required under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

Future irrigated developments will be required to offset their salinity impact or be located in low salinity impact areas to reduce the incremental salt effects of further irrigation development along the River Murray. The provision of infrastructure will play an important role in facilitating future irrigation development in these areas.

The South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) is constructing a demonstration aquaculture facility using the salt interception schemes around Waikerie. Should the research lead to large-scale commercial opportunities, infrastructure would be required.

A major rehabilitation program including improved infrastructure is being undertaken in the Lower Murray reclaimed irrigation area to address the decline in water quality resulting from the discharge of polluted wastewater into the river. This program is expected to free up water for higher-value use.

Drought and low river flows have led to a significant increase in salinity in Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert. Measures are being taken to alleviate the situation and an asset management plan is under development to determine how best to address the issues in the long term.

The Mallee Prescribed Wells Area is located in the eastern portion of the region around Lameroo and Pinnaroo. Consideration is being given to prescribing additional areas to the west and south. Licensing arrangements generally regulate management and use of this shared resource.

The main centres in the region receive filtered water through SA Water; however, smaller communities and some industrial subdivisions rely on unfiltered water or rainwater supplies. The extent of water reticulation has an impact on growth outside the towns due to augmentation costs and supply standards. Demands on the resource for stock, domestic use, town water, and recreation are expected to remain stable.

There are septic tank effluent disposal scheme (STEDS) treatment ponds at Murray Bridge, Mannum and Waikerie.

Transport



The Sturt Highway is the major northern interstate connector and the freight route to Outer Harbor and Adelaide Airport.

The South Eastern Freeway provides a strategic connection between Adelaide and Murray Bridge.

Future economic growth will require efficient transportation links. A priority is therefore to identify and upgrade local linking freight routes, which will improve the efficiency of freight handling and transfer, the level of service to the major highway links and road safety.

The proposed development of a substantial mineral sands deposit near Mindarie, between Karoonda and Loxton, may require an improved transport link to Tailem Bend.

Proposed development of a multi-modal transport hub to the north of Adelaide could generate more road freight activity on a north-west route from the Riverland, and attract freight from Victoria.

Growth in the livestock industry in the Mid North may lead to additional over-dimensional freight from Port Augusta through to Murray Bridge.

The rail link between Adelaide and Melbourne passes through Tailem Bend, where a junction connects to standard-gauge lines terminating at Loxton and Pinnaroo. These rail lines service export grain movement to Port Adelaide.

Community transport, established under an integrated passenger transport model, has improved the options available in the region.

There is no strong demand for commercial air services.

Land

There are key industrial and commercial zones in Murray Bridge, Monarto, Tailem Bend, Meningie and Tintinara, where there is scope for major development based on ease of access to the South Eastern Freeway, rail and other strategic freight routes direct to markets.

The Murraylands requires an industrial precinct for processing primary products such as mineral sands, stock foods, meats and vegetables. This precinct would generate opportunities for transport-related activities.

A shortage of suitably serviced land for industrial development has been identified in the Berri and Renmark areas. Sites under consideration require water, power and telecommunications infrastructure to be upgraded and/or extended.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)



Most of the region is serviced by mobile communications but there are gaps in coverage in some sparsely populated areas and on some secondary roads.

Most of the region has dial-up internet access; however, ADSL broadband access is only available in a few larger centres. Aggregation of demand by large-capacity users will help to provide the critical mass to minimise access costs.

Health



Two regional health authorities, located in Berri and Murray Bridge, manage the health services provided across the region. They cover community and primary care services and 11 hospitals.

There is a continuing need for additional high-level aged care across the region. The ageing population requires further development of a range of services including rehabilitation, high-level residential care, geriatric medical assessment, cancer care and chronic disease management.

Mental health services have identified a need for supported accommodation.

It is important to continue to support regional education partnerships in producing and retaining a health workforce skilled in rural health, Aboriginal health, early intervention and chronic disease management. Health infrastructure needs to accommodate the teaching role with medical, dental, nursing and other health professionals.

Renmark provides a base for university training and research, giving people from rural areas an opportunity to gain a tertiary qualification in their local community. The Flinders University Rural Clinical School operates from Renmark, with financial support from the State and Australian Governments, and offers a nursing degree and clinical training for senior medical students.

Housing

Short and long-term rental accommodation is required to accommodate professionals moving into the area because of career postings, or as a result of the expansion of industry including the abattoirs at Murray Bridge.

The particular housing requirements of the growing seasonal workforce within the horticultural and other industries, and the increasing involvement of backpacker tourists in the harvest workforce, also needs to be recognised and addressed.

Planning policies need to identify land suitable for new housing and to encourage a diverse range of housing types to meet the changing needs of the community, including retirees, the aged, and people with special needs who require community-based support services.

Justice and Emergency Services

An increased need has resulted in the upgrade of the Berri courthouse. Mobilong prison has been recently expanded.

To deliver high standards of service to the community, the SAPOL facilities at Berri are being upgraded.

Education and Training

The TAFE Regional Institute has four campuses in the Riverland and one campus in the Murraylands. School buildings at some locations require significant ongoing maintenance in order to meet modern teaching and learning requirements.

The size of the region is a factor in providing training. Distance and access are issues to be considered when offering courses. Education and training sites need improved broadband capability to enable them to offer an up to date curriculum.

A range of programs is offered by Flinders University Rural Clinical School at its Renmark Hospital site.

Waste Management

Councils and large companies alike have identified waste disposal, especially disposal of liquid waste, as a serious problem along the River in many parts of the region. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) have improved disposal practice.

The EPA is working with industry to promote the adoption of best practice in discharge of industrial wastewater.

Managing solid waste is an issue for local government in the region. Winery waste (marc) provides an opportunity for processing and composting. Currently there is no means of disposing of the large quantities of used copper chromium arsenate (CCA) treated pine posts from vineyards.

Recreation and Sport

The River Murray and Lower Lakes are a multi-use resource that supports a range of important aquatic recreation activities and tourism getaways. A number of national and conservation parks and reserves also cater for those activities.

Adequate facilities will be required to support the growth of recreational and commercial boating activities. Changes in river and lake levels affect usage rates of various areas and facilities.

Arts, Culture and Heritage

Country Arts SA has embarked on a strategic plan to upgrade the existing regional theatres including the Chaffey Theatre at Renmark. The theatre is an important venue for recreational and cultural activities for young people and families in the region, providing venues for live touring performances and creating opportunities to develop community-based cultural activities. The existing infrastructure was constructed about 20 years ago, which is why the current upgrade is so important.

Natural Assets

The River and surrounding country is of particular biodiversity significance because of its combination of wetland, floodplain and semi-arid and dryland systems, which support a broad range of wildlife. The Coorong, Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, Bookmark Biosphere and the Chowilla wetlands are wetlands of international importance. Their special ecological character must be managed to ensure these values are maintained or improved.

Conservation imperatives for the region are maintaining flow regimes to support the ecosystem, looking after underground water resources, conserving remnant native vegetation and associated biodiversity, managing the wetlands, protecting the northern Coorong and its sand dunes, improving soil structure and soil protection methods in the Mallee agricultural district, and developing further management and access strategies for the large conservation parks.

Banrock Station is leading the way as a highly profitable wine and tourism business that is ecologically sustainable. It is recognised internationally for its environmental achievements.

Projects

Project	Priority #	2005/6– 2009/10	2010/11– 2014/15	SASP Targets
Energy				
Energy infrastructure to support industry expansion				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide electricity infrastructure to support mineral sands mining and irrigation industry expansion <p>* Lead – private sector</p>	1	*		1.6
Extension of gas networks to support industry development				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggregate demand to establish a business case for extending the gas distribution network to Loxton, Renmark and Waikerie; and into Tailem Bend and Murray Bridge <p>Lead – private sector</p>	2	*	*	1.6
Water				
Stormwater management at Murray Bridge				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a master plan to manage stormwater flows resulting from severe rainfall events <p>Lead – local government</p>	U/way	*	*	5.11
Managing salinity impacts				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote improved farming practices including more efficient use of land and irrigation water through marketing and education programs 	U/way	*	*	1.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install salt interception schemes on the river where applicable 	U/way	*	*	3.1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and resolve infrastructure implications for development of areas that have high productive potential and provide the lowest ecological impact for the river <p>Lead – State Government, private sector</p>	1	*	*	1.5
Murray Darling Basin Commission Program				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to implement the Murray Darling Basin Commission infrastructure program including sand pumping at the Murray mouth and barrage/weir upgrades and salt interception schemes <p>Lead – State Government</p>	U/way	*	*	3.1 5.11
Higher-value use of wastewater at Murray Bridge and in the Riverland				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the opportunities for reuse of wastewater from high-volume industrial sources for irrigation or industry <p>Lead – State Government, private sector</p>	2	*	*	1.5
Transport				
Traffic capacity on the Sturt Highway				
Upgrade the Sturt Highway to support export-related freight movements, including:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructing overtaking lanes and alignment improvements 	U/way	*	*	1.12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking safety improvements at key locations including Renmark, Berri and Monash 	U/way	*		1.12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing alternatives to the Paringa Bridge crossing the River Murray <p>Lead – Australian Government</p>	2		*	1.12

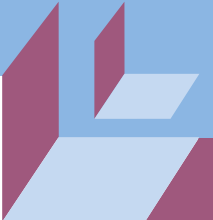
* Lead – lead responsibility for promoting, developing and evaluating the project.

Priority – preliminary rankings. Priority numbers do not represent a final commitment by the State Government or other lead entities. See the Delivering the Plan section for further details.

Project	Priority	2005/6–2009/10	2010/11–2014/15	SASP Targets
Condition of River Murray ferries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete River Murray ferry refurbishment program Lead – State Government	U/way	*		5.11
Transport infrastructure to support mining industry expansion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the strategic need to upgrade transport infrastructure to support mineral sands mining Lead – private sector	2	*		1.5
Airport Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the general aviation potential of Murray Bridge Lead – local government	3	*		5.11
Land				
Industrial precinct and intermodal facility at Tailem Bend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine the feasibility of developing an industrial/intermodal precinct at Tailem Bend Lead – local government, private sector	2	*		1.6
Demand for serviced industrial land in the Berri and Renmark areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop additional serviced industrial land Lead – local government, private sector	2	*	*	1.6
Information and Communications Technology (ICT)				
Access to broadband <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and map demand for broadband services in the region Lead – State Government, local government	U/way	*		4.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case that identifies sufficient aggregated demand to justify installation of broadband Lead – private sector	2	*		4.7
Health				
Sustain quality regional health care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelop Renmark and Murray Bridge hospitals Lead – State Government	U/way	*		2.2
Aged care facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide more aged care facilities and services (residential and community aged care) to meet the needs of an ageing population Lead – Australian Government, private sector, State government	U/way	*		2.2
Ambulance service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct new ambulance station at Murray Bridge Lead – State Government	U/way	*		2.2
Primary health care centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to upgrade hospital facilities to support the co-located delivery of primary health care services including general practice, allied health, mental health and Aboriginal health programs Lead – State Government, private sector	2	*	*	2.2

Project	Priority	2005/6– 2009/10	2010/11– 2014/15	SASP Targets
Community Services and Housing				
Availability of workforce accommodation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider options to provide affordable housing to seasonal workers in the required areas Lead – private sector	U/way	*		5.8
Justice and Emergency Services				
Adequacy of police and court facilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redevelop courthouse and extend regional police facility at Berri Lead – State Government	U/way	*		2.8
Prison facilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake extensions to the Mobilong prison Replace cell block at Cadell Training Centre Lead - State Government	U/way 3	*	*	2.8 5.10
Education and Training				
Utilisation of school assets				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rejuvenate local schools to support improved utilisation and integration of services 	U/way	*		6.14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake planned capital works at Mannum schools and Riverland special school Lead – State Government	U/way	*		6.14
Child care facilities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand capacity of child care facilities Lead – private sector	2	*		5.8
Vocational education and training				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that future infrastructure requirements of TAFE, including ICT, support the expected growth in the primary and allied industries Lead – State Government	2	*	*	6.15 6.17
Science, Technology and Innovation				
Aquaculture demonstration project				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct a demonstration aquaculture facility using the salt interception schemes around Waikerie 	U/way	*		4.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify infrastructure requirements for a commercial aquaculture operation Lead – State Government, private sector	3	*		1.6
Waste Management				
Disposal of CCA treated pine posts from vineyards				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a short-term management plan 	U/way	*		3.11
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and implement options for long-term disposal Lead – private sector, State Government	U/way	*		3.11

Project	Priority	2005/6– 2009/10	2010/11– 2014/15	SASP Targets
Recreation and Sport				
Adequacy of sports facilities in the Murray Bridge area				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review utilisation of existing facilities and determine the feasibility of establishing a multi-purpose facility Lead – local government	2	*		2.7
Arts, Culture and Heritage				
Facilities for performing arts productions				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade the Chaffey Theatre at Renmark Lead – State Government	U/way	*		4.1
Natural Assets				
Lower Murray irrigation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake rehabilitation of the Lower Murray Declared Irrigation area Lead – State Government	U/way	*		1.5



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