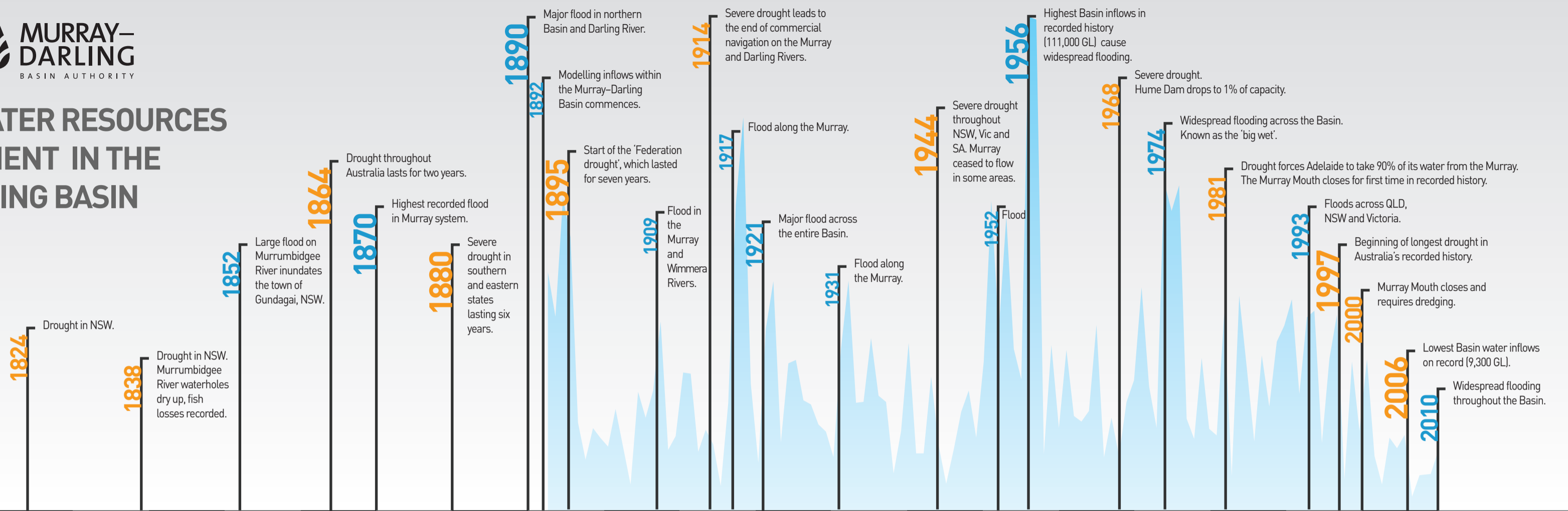


HISTORY OF WATER RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT IN THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN



< 45,000 BP

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

The lands within the Murray-Darling Basin provided Aboriginal Nations with a rich and abundant source of food, water and shelter. Belief in spiritual beings gave special meaning to the plants, animals, land and water in the Basin.

Many Aboriginal creation stories describe the rainbow serpent as the creator of the rivers, streams and water holes. Known by many names, the serpent moved across the land, carving the landscape with its long and powerful body. The rainbow serpent now moves into the river from its resting places in nearby water holes and billabongs to cleanse the rivers and its people.

Aboriginal connection to ancestral lands continues today and is conveyed through stories, totems and law.

Archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the Basin dates to more than 45,000 years BP (before present).

Year	Event
1820s	Drought in NSW.
1830s	Drought in NSW. Murrumbidgee River waterholes dry up, fish losses recorded.
1840s	
1850s	Large flood on Murrumbidgee River inundates the town of Gundagai, NSW.
1860s	Drought throughout Australia lasts for two years.
1870s	Highest recorded flood in Murray system.
1880s	Severe drought in southern and eastern states lasting six years.
1883	Construction work begins on Torrumbarry system to divert water from the Murray into Victorian irrigation areas.
1887	Chaffey brothers establish irrigation settlements at Renmark (SA) and Mildura (Vic).
1890s	Major flood in northern Basin and Darling River.
1892	Modelling inflows within the Murray-Darling Basin commences.
1895	Start of the 'Federation drought', which lasted for seven years.
1897	First (and only) lock and weir built on the Darling at Bourke, NSW.
1899	Goulburn Weir built, first major water diversion structure for irrigation.
1900s	Flood in the Murray and Wimmera Rivers.
1902	Major conference at Corowa to resolve competition between states for River Murray water.
1909	Flood in the Murray and Wimmera Rivers.
1914	Severe drought leads to the end of commercial navigation on the Murray and Darling Rivers.
1915	NSW, Victoria and SA sign River Murray Waters Agreement following three years of negotiation.
1917	Flood along the Murray.
1917	Soldier's settlement schemes established in areas including Berri, Cadell, Cobdogla, Ral Ral and Waikerie.
1921	Major flood across the entire Basin.
1922	Lock 1 completed on Murray River. (13 more built by 1939.)
1931	Flood along the Murray.
1936	Hume Dam completed after 17 years of construction.
1939	Yarrowonga Weir completed. Mulwala Canal established as the largest irrigation channel in Australia. Barrages completed in SA to prevent seawater from entering the Lower Lakes.
1944	Severe drought throughout NSW, Vic and SA. Murray ceased to flow in some areas.
1946	Soldier's settlement schemes recommence in areas including Robinvale and Loxton.
1952	Flood
1956	Highest Basin inflows in recorded history (111,000 GL) cause widespread flooding.
1967	South Australia freezes irrigation entitlements.
1967	Burrundong Dam on the Macquarie River completed.
1968	South Australia introduces cap on water diversions.
1968	Menindee Lakes water storage scheme completed.
1974	Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme completed.
1974	Widespread flooding across the Basin. Known as the 'big wet'.
1979	Dartmouth Dam on the Mitta Mitta River completed.
1981	Drought forces Adelaide to take 90% of its water from the Murray. The Murray Mouth closes for first time in recorded history.
1987	Murray-Darling Basin Agreement first signed, initially as an amendment to the River Murray Waters Agreement of 1915.
1992	New Murray-Darling Basin Agreement replaces River Murray Water Agreement.
1993	Floods across QLD, NSW and Victoria.
1995	Interim Cap on water diversion introduced to prevent increase of water diversions.
1997	Beginning of longest drought in Australia's recorded history.
1998	Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) group is formed.
2000	Murray Mouth closes and requires dredging.
2004	National Water Initiative signed by all governments. The Living Murray First Step signed by Basin state governments.
2006	Lowest Basin water inflows on record (9,300 GL).
2007	Water Act 2007 introduced.
2008	MDBA formed. M-DB Agreement becomes part of the Water Act 2007.
2010	Northern MD-Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) group formed.
2010	Basin Plan becomes law.
2012	

CONSTRUCTION

WATER MANAGEMENT