

# Fact sheet 9: Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan Background



*A draft Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Strategic Management Plan (SMP) 2018-2033 has been released for public consultation. The new plan will shape policy and management of the Basin over the next 15 years.*

## Background

The Great Artesian Basin is Australia's largest underground water resource, underlying approximately 22 per cent of the continent. The GAB provides the only reliable source of fresh water through much of inland Australia and it is estimated that it contributes nearly \$13 billion to the Australian economy each year. It is one of the few major artesian basins in the world that has not been severely over exploited.

The GAB is the life blood of many communities, landholders and industries, and it supports diverse natural ecosystems and cultural values that have national and international significance. The active participation of water users and other community interests has always been an essential part of managing use of the GAB to sustain water supplies and protect community values. The key role of 'strategic planning' for the GAB is to enable management decisions to be responsive to needs and to be based on reliable timely information that is generated, collected, shared and critically analysed across all GAB interests.

The first GAB Strategic Management Plan (SMP) was released in 2000 with a life of 15 years. That document was the first 'whole of-Basin' management plan to be adopted by all governments responsible for the management of the GAB, seeking to address the critical issues and limitations in management identified by GAB stakeholders.

## Draft SMP 2018-2033 for public consultation

A draft of the SMP 2018-2033 is now available for consultation. Government priorities, budgets, and frameworks for planning and management have changed significantly since 2000 and governments have worked with the Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee (GABCC) to draft a new SMP that reflects the current state of the GAB and provides a useful framework for future management.

The SMP 2018-2033 has a life of 15 years, and will be subject to 5-yearly review.

It is an invaluable tool to guide anyone making decisions about the use of GAB water resources or who is dependent on GAB water for their wellbeing or livelihood.

Based on improved understanding and lessons learned since release of the SMP 2000, the SMP 2018-2033:

- proposes an evidence-based risk management approach that relates to current jurisdictional water management legislation, national water agreements and planning/ management guidelines
- identifies current issues in GAB management and encourages governments to work in partnership with water users and other interests to continue to improve the use and management of the Basin
- is structured around clearly defined principles with objectives and outcomes as a framework for GAB management.

### Principles underpinning the Draft SMP 2018-2033

*Coordinated governance* - working together to manage the GAB as a whole, in a way that meets the agreed needs of all stakeholders

*A healthy resource* - maintaining artesian pressure and water quality to support natural ecosystems and a wide range of human activities, including economic, social and cultural uses

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, cultural heritage and other community values*

- ensuring that cultural and community values that rely on GAB water are an integral part of the water planning and management process

*Secure and managed access* – providing flows for the environment and secure and commercially certain access to authorised users, with clear rights and responsibilities

*Judicious use* - minimising impacts of extraction on flows and pressures while meeting requirements for existing users and water dependent ecosystems, and for development where possible

*Information, knowledge and understanding for good management* – supporting responsible, productive and efficient management with accurate, timely and readily accessible information

*Information management, communication and education* – ensuring that information about water resource management and GAB values is publicly available, accessible and understandable.

## Public Consultation on the draft SMP 2018-2033

The GABCC will play a key role along with government agencies in engaging community and industry stakeholders, in ensuring understanding of the principles, objectives and outcomes in the SMP, in exploring stakeholder issues and concerns, helping to communicate those issues and concerns to water managers, and advocating for them to be considered and addressed.

Community and industry stakeholders are encouraged to organise and participate in forums and to contact GABCC members or government managers to explore and discuss the draft SMP 2018-2033.

The SMP is very important to all water users, managers and other interest groups. Working cooperatively to implement the SMP 2018-2033 will be of real benefit to all. Now that the Consultation Draft is released you will need to familiarise yourself with its contents, encourage others and take the opportunity to ask questions and make comment on whatever you feel appropriate.

## Further reading

### Background and achievements of the SMP 2000:

- *Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan: Progress and Achievements to 2008* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/strategic-management-plan-progress-and-achievements-2008](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/strategic-management-plan-progress-and-achievements-2008).
- *Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan: Focus and Prospects 2008-2015* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/strategic-management-plan-focus-and-prospects-2008-2015](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/strategic-management-plan-focus-and-prospects-2008-2015).

### Issues and future directions to inform the SMP 2018-2033

- *Briefing paper: working towards better futures for the GAB (2013)* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-4-working-toward-better-futures-gab](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-4-working-toward-better-futures-gab).
- *Future Directions of the Management of the Great Artesian Basin (2015)* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/gab-future-directions](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/gab-future-directions).

### Background detail on GABSI and other issues

- *GABSI fact sheet* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/gabsi-fact-sheet](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/gabsi-fact-sheet);
- *briefing note: www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-3-great-artesian-basin-sustainability-initiative*.

### Other Reports

*GAB Bore Data Report* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications).

*GAB Economic Output Report* [www.gabcc.gov.au/basin-management/gab-economic-report](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/basin-management/gab-economic-report). Factsheet [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications).

*GAB Cultural values fact sheet* [<http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/cultural-values-fact-sheet>]

- *Coal Seam Gas extraction briefing notes* [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-1-coal-seam-gas-extraction-gab](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-1-coal-seam-gas-extraction-gab); [www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-2-coal-seam-gas-extraction-gab](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/publications/briefing-note-no-2-coal-seam-gas-extraction-gab).

The draft *Strategic Management Plan 2018-2033* is available at: [www.gabcc.gov.au/basin-management/strategic-management-plan](http://www.gabcc.gov.au/basin-management/strategic-management-plan).