Paroo (SS29)

INITIAL SDL ASSESSMENT RESULT

The Authority is **confident** that the SDL continues to reflect an environmentally sustainable level of take and **proposes the SDL is maintained**.

It is recognised that the extent, nature of and planning for continued monitoring, evaluation and assessment is tailored by the Queensland government for the management of local and site-specific areas of concern to maintain environmental outcomes.

It is important that the impacts of a changing climate continue to be actively considered for this Unit.

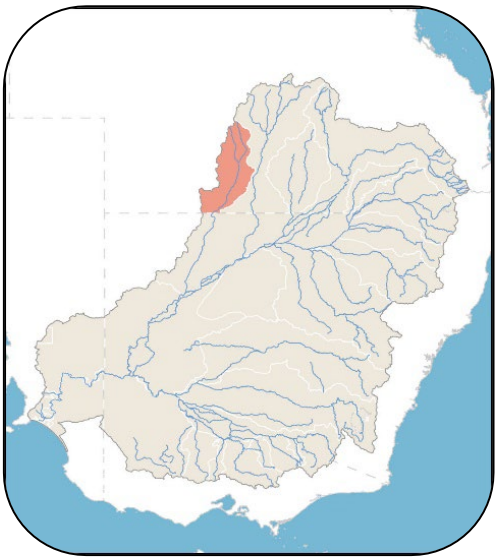

Figure 1: Paroo (SS29) SDL Resource Unit

The Authority has assessed whether the Sustainable Diversion Limit (SDL) for the Paroo SDL Resource Unit (the **Unit**) continues to support environmental outcomes and reflect an environmentally sustainable level of take (ESLT).

This Assessment Summary provides an overview of the factors which are relevant to that work and the Authority's initial view. This Unit has minimal diversions and the flow regime remains relatively intact. Therefore, the lite assessment approach has been applied. The approach uses a subset of the Multiple Lines of Evidence information base to inform the initial assessment. Current monitoring condition, drivers and climate change risks have been considered.

Information on the Lines of Enquiry and methodology used in this assessment available in the *Summary of Assessment Approach* and the *SDL Assessment and Response Framework*. Information on the *Basin Plan Review Discussion Paper* and process for making a submission are available on the MDBA website.

About this Unit (as at June 2024)

Ramsar sites	Currawinya Lakes
Contribution to Basin Water	2% of the Murray-Darling Basin (approx.)
Key waterways	Paroo River; Tributaries: Beechal, Yowan and Qulberry creeks
Water storages	None
Significant groundwater connections	Not applicable

The Water Resource Plan (WRP) that supports this Unit commenced on 28 June 2017. The WRP includes the rules and arrangements that Queensland are using to manage this Unit. Information on water recovery for this SDL Resource Unit is available at the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's surface water recovery factsheet.

Current Condition

Figure 2 below summarises the observed environmental condition in the Unit (as at June 2024).

As can be seen, the Authority assessed that most themes were in moderate to good condition, however Native Fish condition is poor. Confidence in the evidence base was low to medium. No rating could be determined for 'Other species' because of a lack of data.

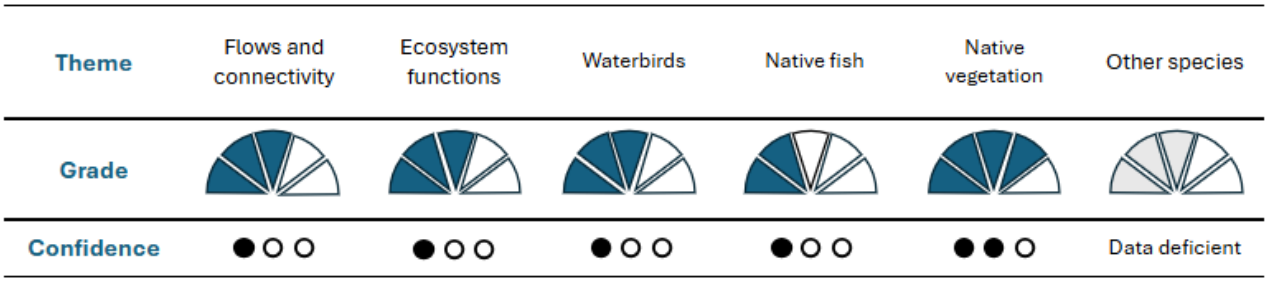

Figure 2. Environmental condition assessment in the Unit. Across each theme environmental condition is graded as *Very Poor*, *Poor*, *Moderate*, *Good*, *Very Good* or *Not assessed* (as indicated by segments) and confidence in this grading is assessed as Low, Medium, High or Data deficient (as indicated by dots). The Not assessed grading applies where there are no ecological objectives and no relevant data. The data deficient grading relies heavily on expert elicitation to address data paucity. Other species refers to animals including frogs, platypuses and turtles.

Environmental outcomes under a fully implemented Basin Plan

No water recovery was required, and the Basin Plan is considered fully implemented in this Unit. The flow regime remains relatively intact and will support the needs of those water-dependent ecosystems.

Environmental outcomes under a climate impacted future

For a description of anticipated climate impacts across the Basin see the *Surface Water Assessment Approach* published on the MDBA website.

Initial Assessment

As noted, the current assessment reflects that flow regime requirements for the six themes are currently supported by the SDLs.

The Authority is **confident** that the SDL reflects an environmentally sustainable level of take and is supporting the Basin Plan's environmental outcomes under full implementation conditions. There is a current risk to Native Fish environmental outcomes that are likely driven by non-SDL factors such as introduced species.

It is also the case that the Basin Plan settings in connection with monitoring, evaluation and assessment activities warrant review as they apply to this Unit. Other relevant factors include planning by the Queensland government for the management of local and site-specific areas of concern to maintain environmental outcomes.

Consideration of Response

The current condition of the Native fish theme has been assessed as poor in this Unit. Due to low levels of development and the impacts arising from non-SDL drivers, response options that have an impact on SDLs are unlikely to be effective. Response options to mitigate risks to environmental outcomes resulting from climate change are also limited in this unit. It is recognised that ongoing monitoring, evaluation and assessment will be important.

The Discussion Paper engages with well-known challenges at a sub-Basin and Basin scale including river connectivity and the connection between rivers and their floodplains, water delivery challenges and physical constraints, native fish decline and the impacts of introduced species. The risks of a changing climate continue to be actively considered in the Basin.

Evidence

In addition to the standard evidence sources presented in the *Summary of Assessment Approach* the following specific evidence sources were used for this Unit:

- Paroo catchment | Murray–Darling Basin Authority
- Cuttaburra National Park | NSW National Parks
- Investigations into fish population resilience following severe drought in the northern Murray-Darling Basin (Unpublished, Pre-Print Version, Aug 2025) | State of Queensland, 2025
- The 2025 Sustainable Rivers Audit | Murray–Darling Basin Authority, 2025