Blackwater FAQs

Does environmental watering contribute to blackwater events?

In making environmental watering decisions, The Living Murray considers potential risks, such as blackwater and the ways to minimise the risks before watering begins.

Blackwater[[1]](#footnote-1) events can result from natural or managed environmental watering. It happens because carbon, often stored in forest leaf litter, is washed from the floodplain into adjacent water-bodies. Aquatic micro-organisms feed on this added carbon, multiply in numbers and consequently deplete the oxygen content of the water. This can cause the death of some freshwater animals such as fish and crayfish. Regular flushing of the forest floor provides long-term benefits such as reducing the potential for future blackwater events to occur. Carbon entering the food web also helps to increase the number of zooplankton and macroinvertebrates, which are food sources for fish and other freshwater animals.

The Living Murray planning processes incorporate arrangements to manage the risk of generating water quality issues (including blackwater). These are consistent with the requirements of the Basin Plan.

1. Blackwater is a term used to describe water with a very low to zero oxygen content. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)