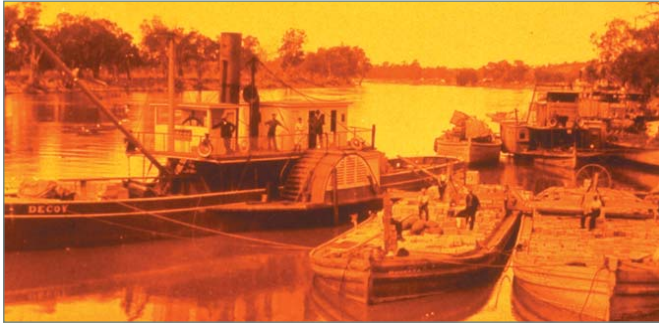




# Save the Murray

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## European Settlement



The first European settlers arrived at Sydney Cove in 1788. After being restricted to the land between the coast and the Great Dividing Range, they sought to expand the colony. Early explorers conquered the Great Dividing Range and 25 years later, a vast river system now known as the Murray-Darling, stretching 2580kms was discovered. This prompted further exploration of the rivers to determine if they flowed into an inland sea or turned south and flowed into the ocean.

Hamilton Hume and William Hovell were the first known Europeans to see the River Murray, near Albury on 16 November 1824. The name Hume was given to the river in honour of Hume's father. Captain Charles Sturt and Major Thomas Mitchell later explored the Murray and Darling in 1829, and in 1830 named the river Murray in honour of Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies. When Sturt named the river, he considered it to be a new river, only later were they to realise it was the same river as Hume and Hovell had named six years earlier. However, by that time the River was already known as the Murray.

Between 1840 and 1850 squatters settled on the river frontage and sheep and cattle were introduced to the Murray Valley. In the 1840s, all land along the Murray had been taken over for grazing.

The river was first used by settlers for transportation. In 1853 the first iron paddle steamers, PS Mary Ann and Lady Augusta, were built to navigate the river after the Governor of South Australia offered a reward for the first steamboat to travel from Goolwa to the Darling junction. This was to help promote Adelaide as an important port for the riverboat trade.

The construction of steamers opened up large areas in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. They provided a source of supplies and contact with the outside world for many settlers. Steamboats allowed for the fast transportation of larger, heavier supplies to be brought into the new colonies, which could not have been achieved economically or physically using bullock teams. The paddle steamers turned the rivers into inland highways and contributed enormously to settlement and development of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Almost the entire Basin had been explored and occupied by Europeans within 50 years of the crossing of the Great Dividing Range. The gold discoveries of the 1850s brought a new wave of population growth and this in turn led to widespread agricultural development. In the 1860s, steam boats regularly serviced all accessible towns on the river. As the steamboats opened up the inland for settlement it also opened up a distinctly different and new environment which the settlers were unfamiliar with. The development of a European way of life resulted in unintentional degradation of many of the Basin's natural resources. This lack of knowledge about soil, climate, and geology of the Murray-Darling Basin has led to serious environmental problems including salinity, rising water tables and excessive vegetation clearances.



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## European Settlement Continued

During early settlement, River Red Gum was used for building almost everything, from slab huts to bridges, carts and joinery. The timber played an important role in river traffic as it provided fuel and wood for boat building. It was also used in mining, the development of railways, wharves, blocks for roadways and fences.

By 1878, railways in South Australia linked Morgan with the port of Adelaide, which came to replace Goolwa as state's the main port. In the following year a new road bridge was built at Murray Bridge which also linked Adelaide by rail. Five years later, the railway was extended over the road bridge and Murray Bridge became the major shipping terminal below Morgan.

In the 1880s, the introduction of irrigation brought with it new developments and an increased demand for a reliable supply of water. Dams and weirs were constructed to help with the demand for water and an extensive irrigation supply and disposal system was also developed.

Railway lines and roads took over the steamboat industry at the turn of the century, as they linked many river towns with larger cities outside of the Basin. This reduced the river traffic at ports along the river. Since the river was navigable for only 8 months of the year on average, the railways offered a cheaper, faster and more reliable form of transport.