



**MENINDEE LAKES WETLANDS PROJECT - RAMSAR NOMINATION
FACT SHEET 2
WHAT ARE WETLANDS ?**

Wetlands are areas of land where water covers the soil – all year or just at certain times of the year.

They include:

- swamps, marshes
- billabongs, lakes, lagoons
- saltmarshes, mudflats
- mangroves, coral reefs
- bogs, fens, and peatlands.

Wetlands may be natural or artificial and the water within a wetland may be static or flowing, fresh, brackish or saline. There are even underground wetlands.

Why are wetlands important?

Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality.

They provide habitat for animals and plants and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals that are found nowhere else.

Wetlands provide an important range of environmental, social and economic services.

Many wetlands are areas of great natural beauty and many are important to Aboriginal people.

Wetlands also provide important benefits for industry.

For example, they form nurseries for fish and other freshwater and marine life and are critical to Australia's commercial and recreational fishing industries.

Wetlands are the vital link between land and water.

Australia's wetlands

Australia currently has 64 Ramsar wetlands that cover around 7.5 million hectares. Ramsar wetlands are those that are representative, rare or unique wetlands, or are important for conserving biological diversity. These are included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance held under the Ramsar convention. Australia also has more than 900 nationally important wetlands. These are wetlands that are a good example in a particular area, an important habitat for native species, or that have outstanding heritage or cultural significance. Nationally important wetlands are listed on the directory of important wetlands.

All Australia's internationally and nationally important wetlands are listed on the Australian Wetlands Database. <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/topics/wetlands/database/diwa.html>