Why do we need a new source for Albany and surrounds?

Information sheet – June 2025

Where does our water currently come from?

The Lower Great Southern Towns Water Supply is operated and maintained by Water Corporation. It supplies water to residents and businesses in Albany, Mt Barker, Kendenup and Denmark.

Approximately 40,000 people are supplied drinking water this way. The town of Albany makes up approximately 80% of the water demand.

The water supplied comes from Water Corporation's Albany groundwater bores on the Torndirrup Peninsula. It supplies up to 5,050 million litres annually - that's more than 2000 Olympic sized swimming pools!

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) regulate use of the groundwater and set limits on how much water can be drawn.

Angove River is a stream water source East of Albany. Historically, Water Corporation was permitted to take up to 1,600 million litres per year to supply the area. However, this source has become unreliable as rainfall declines. Water Corporation has been unable to draw any water from Angove River since 2022.

Why do we need a new source?

A new water source for the Lower Great Southern area is required by 2030 because of:

- predicted future growth[1] in Albany and surrounds
- a decline in average rainfall
- reductions in groundwater limits set by DWER.

Since the 1970s, in south-west WA there has been a 16 per cent decline in winter rainfall[2]. Parts of the Great Southern region recently received their lowest rainfall on record for the past two years[3]. Thirty-year average annual rainfall for Albany (measured at Albany Airport weather station) will decline by up to 21% out to 2050, under most climate predictions[4].

Declining rainfall and pressure on groundwater supplies have led DWER to revise the limits on groundwater being taken in the lower Great Southern. This has reduced the amount of water available to supply the lower Great Southern towns by about 10%.

Groundwater will continue to play a part of our water future, but it won't be enough on its own. That's why **seawater desalination,** a **rainfall-independent** source capable of delivering the amounts of water required, needs to be part of the long-term plan - it's needed to supply enough water to a growing community, in a changing climate.

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[1] Growth predictions based on data sourced from .id

[2] Lawrence, J, Mackey, F, Chiew, M, et al. Chapter 11: Australasia. Climate change 2022: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability – Australasia. Contribution of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.e. doi:10.1017/9781009325844.013

[3] Bureau of Meteorology drought report (4 April 2025) for period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025

[4] 'Climate projections, emissions scenarios and climate change in Western Australia report' published by DWER in 2021

WATER CORPORATION

Rainfall patterns and predictions

To best understand rainfall and how it replenishes the groundwater beneath Albany's borefield, Water Corporation's assessment of future rainfall has focused on information from all Albany weather stations: Albany airport, Albany (town) and Little Grove.

Weather patterns on the Torndirrup Peninsula, where the current Water Corporation borefield is located, vary from the hinterland parts of Albany as the nearby ocean affects the weather. Little Grove weather station is closest to our bores on the Torndirrup Peninsula.

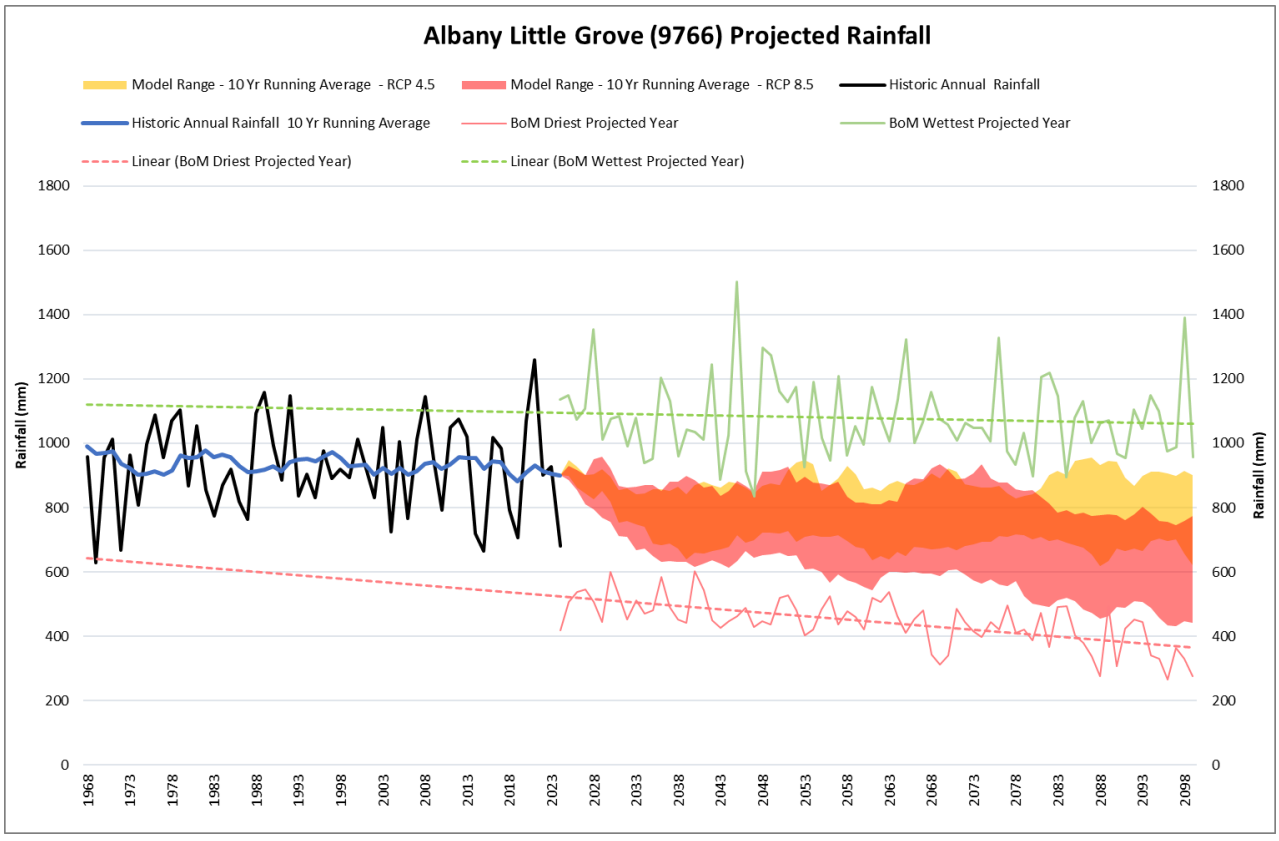
Rainfall decline on the Torndirrup Peninsula

Little Grove (BoM station number 9766) received just 681.6 mm of rain in 2024, one of the lowest years on record.

The graph below displays historic rainfall along with its ten-year running average and summarises a range of future rainfall predictions. It shows what may be the wettest predicted rainfall and the driest predicted rainfall. It also shows what the average rainfall may be in the future under two climate change scenarios. Those two scenarios are:

- global carbon emissions are significantly reduced (known internationally as 'RCP4.5'), or
- global carbon emissions remain high, as they currently are (known internationally as 'RCP 8.5').

Future rainfall patterns are uncertain but, in most cases, rainfall at Little Grove is predicted to decline.



When compared to historic rainfall amounts, all predictions we have assessed for Little Grove show the thirty-year average will decline to 2050, by up to 29%.

This would be a reduction from an average of 941 mm of rainfall per year for the period 1976-2005, to as low as 672mm per year for the period 2021-2050.