

Lesson 4: Liveability and the Natural Environment

As you have learnt, liveability differs from place to place. This is largely because no two places are exactly alike. One small town, for example, may have wonderful sporting facilities but no hospital while a nearby town may have several hospitals but poor sporting facilities.

Liveability is impacted by both natural and man-made features. In this lesson, you will focus on some of the natural features that impact liveability, using the Wimmera region as a case study.

Task 1

1. In the first column of the following table are a number of natural landscape features. In the second column, briefly describe how each feature could negatively impact the liveability of a place. In the third column, briefly describe how this feature could positively impact liveability. The first one has been done as an example.

Natural features	Possible negative impacts	Possible positive impacts
Land and soils	Hilly or mountainous landscapes may be difficult to farm and may also create difficulties building roads.	Flat land and fertile soils are often ideal landscapes for farming and food production.
Rivers, streams and wetlands		
Native plants and animals		
Climate, including rainfall and temperature		

Water

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth. Over tens of thousands of years, people in this landscape have developed systems to use this precious resource. Liveability in all parts of Australia is closely connected to the supply of fresh water. In a semi-arid farming region such as the Wimmera, the presence or absence of water is, in many ways, the most important natural feature.

Task 2

In this activity, you will use a method known as 'jigsaw groups' to learn about water use in the Wimmera and to share your learning with other students. Follow the guidance of your teacher and the steps below.

Step 1. Your teacher will place you into groups of three. Each person in the group will be responsible for learning about a particular type of water resource in the Wimmera:

- Rivers and streams (see <https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au/themes/water/rivers-and-streams/>)
- Wetlands (see <https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au/themes/water/wetlands/>)
- Groundwater (see <https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au/themes/water/groundwater/>)

Step 2. Form an expert group with other students in your class who have been allocated the same water resource as you. In your expert group, read together your information and make a list of all the ways in which this water resource is used in the Wimmera region.

Step 3. Reform into your original group and share what you have found with your group. In your group, add labels to the following infographic to show these water uses.



Figure 1. An infographic showing a rural landscape. Source: <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/murray-darling-basin-plan/what-is-the-murray-darling-basin-plan/water-resource-plans/interactive/wmwrp/infographic>

2. Explain how a reliable supply of water can enhance the liveability of a semi-arid rural region such as the Wimmera.

Task 3

One of the most important water resources in this region is the Wimmera River. Access this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yle76lhY5oU> (8.10min) and answer the questions that follow to learn about the importance of a healthy Wimmera River in enhancing liveability.

- a. The narrator in this program is Tammy Van Wisse. How have her experiences been valuable in learning about the importance of a healthy river system?

- b. In what ways can a healthy river help with the mental health of nearby residents?



Figure 2 Wimmera River at Dimboola showing a jetty and the water level.

c. What happened to the Wimmera River in the first decade of this century?

d. How does the annual Horsham fishing competition enhance the liveability of this city?

e. What other activities are popular on or near the river?

f. Choose one still from the video that you think best sums up the importance of a healthy river system. Paste this into your notes, add the URL of the video as an acknowledgement of the source and a caption describing what this image shows.

Task 4

Natural resources such as rivers and streams can mean different things to different groups of people. The Wimmera region includes the traditional lands of the Wotjobaluk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali, Wergaia and Jupagulk People and they have a special connection with the region and its natural environment. Access an introduction to these First Peoples at <https://wimmera.rcs.vic.gov.au/region/first-nations-introduction/>



Figure 3: Elders at Wimmera River Yarns event. Source: Wimmera CMA.

- a. Read the two introductions included on this webpage and list the connections to the natural environment included in these introductions.
