



AUSTRALIAN
WATER
ASSOCIATION

Australian Conventional Units of Measurement in Water

Symbol	Definition	Name	Practical example	Conversion
Length				
M	standard unit of length	metre	one large pace	3.28 ft
mm	1/1,000 m	millimetre	cardboard thickness	1/25.4 inches
μm	1/1,000 mm	micron or micrometre	typical bacterium 1 μm long	10^{-6} m
nm	1/1,000,000 mm	nanometre	typical virus	10^{-9} m
cm	1/100 m (uncommon)	centimetre	pinkie finger 1.5 cm wide	1/2.54 inches
km	1,000 m	kilometre	5 minute fast jog	1/1.61 miles
Volume				
m^3	standard unit	cubic metre	5 44-gallon oil drums	219.97 Imp. gal.
kL	same as m^3	kilolitre	standard box trailer	264.2 US gal.
L	1/1000 m^3	litre	carton of milk	1.76 pints
mL	1/1,000 L	millilitre	5 mL = 1 teaspoon	0.0352 fluid oz.
ML	1,000 m^3	Megalitre	half Olympic swimming pool	0.2642 mg (US)
GL	1,000,000 m^3	Gigalitre	Australia uses 24,000 GL/y	810.71 acre feet
sydharb	Sydney Harbour	sydharb		approx 500 GL
km^3	1,000,000,000 m^3	cubic kilometre	world fresh water 10,530 km^3	0.2399 miles ³
Mass				
kg	standard unit	kilogram	loaf of bread	2.205 lb
t	1,000 kg	tonne	payload for large ute	2,205 lb
g	1/1,000 kg	gram	2 sheets of A4 bond paper	1/28.3 ounces
mg	1/1,000 g	milligram	postage stamp = 40 mg	
Flow				
L/s	1/1,000 m^3/s	litre per second	garden tap runs at ~0.3 L/s	131.6 gpm (Imp.)
cumec	1 m^3/s	cubic m per second	modest river	
ML/d	1,000,000 L/d	Megalitre per day	2,000 people use ~ 1 ML/d	0.264 US mgd
Concentration				
mg/L	1 mg in volume of 1 L	milligram per litre	2 kg sugar in Olympic pool	
$\mu\text{g}/\text{L}$	10^{-6} mg in 1 L	microgram per litre	2 g sugar in Olympic pool	

Remarks: Strictly speaking, the SI (metric) system renders a litre as *l*, but in Australia it is usually written as L to avoid confusion with the digit, 1, in standard typefaces.

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