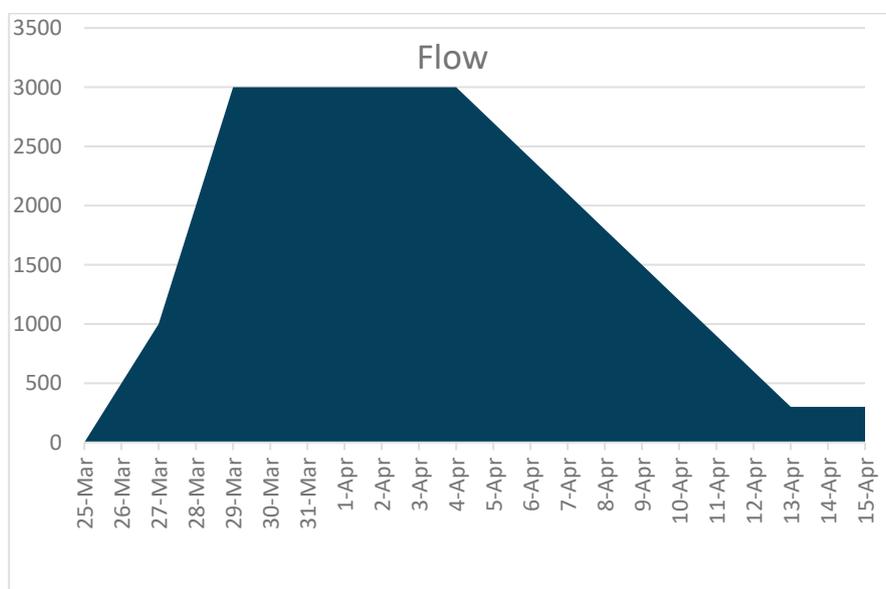


Pattern of releases

To improve the quality of the water to be released into the Lower Darling, the first poorest quality water was diverted into the dry bed of Lake Pamamaroo from Lake Wetherell before the releases to the Lower Darling commenced. Wetting the lake bed was the best and safest use of this water, given that inflows will now exceed Lake Wetherell's capacity.

Releases into the Lower Darling commenced on 26 March, increasing from 500 megalitres (ML)/day to 2,000 ML/day on 28 March. Releases from Weir 32 at the rate of 3,000 ML/day for seven days commenced on Sunday 29 March. Following that period, the releases will steadily reduce in increments of 250 ML/day until the flow is at 300 ML/day – which will continue as the base flow release. The pulse release will look as follows, but will be actively managed and potentially adjusted depending on the water quality monitoring results.



It is expected that the water will take up to three weeks to reach Wentworth Weir at the end of the Lower Darling. Estimated travel times and dates are:

- Weir 32 to Pooncarie - 12 days (arriving around around 7 April)
- Pooncarie to Burtundy- 3-4 days (around 10 to 11 April)
- Burtundy to Wentworth - 1-2 days (around 13 to 15 April)

The higher flows will help ensure that the many previously disconnected pools along the Lower Darling are filled more rapidly. This will help reduce water quality risks and potential fish deaths.

However, despite best efforts there remains some risk to fish when the head of the flow first enters a refuge pool causing the water to 'turn over', and creating pockets of low dissolved oxygen areas for around 6 to 12 hours before the pool fills. Aerators will be retained until the flows arrive to assist in mixing the pool water and strong flow rates will reduce the persistence poor water quality.

The head of the flow will also be saline and highly turbid as it picks up debris from the riverbed. However, the water coming behind the front should be of better quality.

The water will be unsuitable for domestic and recreational use for a period because of the poor quality and the debris in the river.



First flows making their way down the Darling River on 29 March.

Access to flows

Menindee Lakes is now holding over 200 gigalitres (GL) and there will be enough water to provide both the initial pulse flow and at least 12 months of supply for priority needs.

On Monday 31 March the department repealed the Lower Darling 324 temporary water restriction. This means that access is now allowed to all water in Lower Darling accounts including that water previously suspended.

The final restriction on access to Barwon-Darling floodplain flows upstream of Menindee Lakes was also lifted on 31 March as the water on the floodplain is no longer coming from, nor draining back into, the river. The take of water from the Barwon-Darling floodplain will not therefore impact on river flows. This is consistent with the department's approach of progressively lifting upstream restrictions once supplies to the Lower Darling were assured.

On Wednesday 1 April 2020 the department increased the allocations for town water, domestic and stock and high security licence holders in the Lower Darling to 100% for the remainder of the water year. These licence holders had until then been limited to 50% (high priority) and 30% (high security) allocations. Full high priority and high security allocations should be available for 2020-21.

For further information on water allocations go to: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements

For further information on water quality of the water as it travels along the Lower Darling, go to our water quality updates at: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/drought-recovery/menindee-lakes-lower-darling-river