

1 March 2021

NSW Murray and Lower Darling

Water allocation update

There is **no increase to general security entitlements in the NSW Murray regulated river water source**. The total allocation to general security in the NSW Murray remains at 50% of entitlement for this water year. Allocations in the **Lower Darling also remain unchanged**.

Receding inflows from early February rainfall have improved resources in the NSW Murray by about 35,000 megalitres (ML). The improvement has been used to commence payback to the Barmah Millewa EWA (BMEWA), in accordance with the water sharing plan.

With 'exceptional circumstances' under the BMEWA rules claimed by NSW, and general security allocation having reached 50% of entitlement, payback of the borrowed BMEWA water has now commenced. Further resource improvements this year must be assigned to the BMEWA until the balance, currently around 344,000 ML, is repaid. The pay back volume can be seen in the following pie-graph as 'rules-based environmental water', currently showing 36,000 ML (36 GL).

Along with the BMEWA payback, reserves to assure high priority needs for 2021-22 will also continue to be built. Therefore, to achieve the necessary resource improvements for general security allocations to resume this water year, above average to wet conditions are needed.

The Menindee Lakes system is currently 18% full, holding around 310,000 ML. The current flows in the upstream systems are unlikely to result in a meaningful improvement to resource availability, meaning the system will likely continue to draw down. Releases to the Lower Darling are at seasonal minimums. The Menindee resource becomes shared with other States when the system next holds more than 640,000 ML. Further significant inflows are required into the Menindee system before the current 30% general security allocation for Lower Darling water users can be increased.

2020-21	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage
Murray	97%	50%	21%	 Stage 1
Lower Darling	100%	30%	48%	 Stage 2

Drought stage

The **NSW Murray** regulated river water source is in Stage 1 drought criticality, meaning normal river operations are able to deliver water orders. The **Lower Darling** regulated river water source remains in Stage 2 because, while there was some recovery, further inflows are needed.

Further information on critical valleys in drought can be found at:

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought

Murray storage levels (as at 26 February)*

- Dartmouth Dam is 63% full – steady – holding 2,440,000 ML.
- Hume Dam is 54% full – falling – holding 1,630,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 38% full – falling – holding 255,000 ML.

* The NSW share of this water is approximately 37%, 48% and 49% for these storages respectively, or 42% in total.

State sharing of the Murray resource

The bulk accounts assessment indicates that 4,470 gigalitres (GL) of total shared Murray resource is available in the extreme dry (99th percentile) case, of which about 930 GL is needed to run the system (incorporating South Australia's dilution entitlement and any shared resource which cannot be regulated). The NSW portion of the regulated shared resource is 1,660 GL based on rules in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Following adjustments including South Australia's non-dilution entitlement, trade, tributary inflows and usage to date, the assessment results in a volume of **Murray resource for NSW to allocate of 1,950 GL.**

The bulk resource assessed by MDBA includes supplementary and uncontrolled flow diversion in the NSW usage. Therefore, the 2,070 GL assessed share of Murray resource must be reduced by 120 GL to 1,950 GL to account for water used from unregulated water sources. Note: the unregulated water usage does not adversely impact regulated allocations.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for March to May indicates that rainfall is likely to be average to above average across the catchment. Daytime temperatures are likely to be near average, while overnight temperatures are likely to be above average.

The Bureau has declared La Niña conditions, however; the event has peaked and ENSO conditions are returning to neutral. Weakening La Niña conditions are still expected to influence rainfall into early autumn.

For further details: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary

Trade

In the Murray, trade across the Barmah choke remains restricted to **'no net trade downstream'**. Downstream trade opens to the extent of the volume of any upstream trade. The trade restriction helps to address the physical constraint at the choke and protect existing downstream entitlement holders from an increased risk of delivery shortfall. Water users are encouraged to monitor the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) website (www.mdba.gov.au) for information about the trade balance and status of trade across the Barmah choke.

Temporary trade between the Lower Darling and the Murray is closed and typically remains closed until the system recovers to hold more than 640 GL of water and the Menindee Lakes become part of the shared Murray system. Trade within the Lower Darling water source is allowed.

The normal operating range for the Murrumbidgee IVT account is between 0 GL and 100 GL. Trade **out** of the Murrumbidgee Valley is **closed** (as at 26 February 2021) with the IVT balance at its upper limit. Trade **into** the Murrumbidgee Valley is **open**. Water users should check the WaterNSW website (www.waternsw.com.au) for daily information about the IVT account balance and the status of trade.

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement will be published on **Monday 15 March 2021**. The next statement will include preliminary information on potential water availability on 1 July 2021 for the 2021-22 water year. This information is provided to help water users with their end of year water management decisions and will become more reliable as the forecast period reduces.

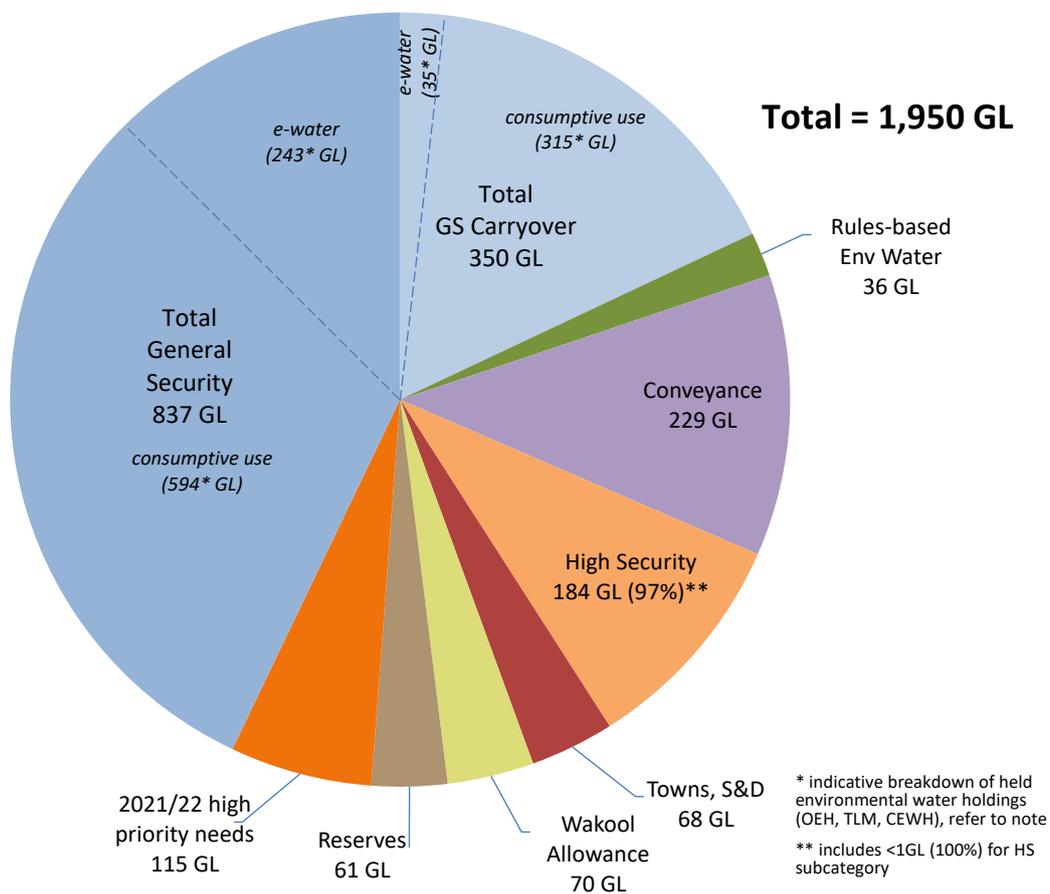
NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution* (1 March) for 2020-21	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	1,950 [#]
less	
Carryover ^{(2), (8)}	350
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽³⁾	36
Towns, Stock, Domestic ⁽⁴⁾	68 (100%)
Announced High Security subcategory ⁽⁴⁾	<1 (100%)
Announced High Security ⁽⁴⁾	184 (97%)
Conveyance ⁽⁵⁾	229 (69%)
Wakool Allowance ⁽⁶⁾	70
Reserves ⁽⁷⁾	61
Announced General Security ⁽⁸⁾	837 (50%)
Year 2 (2021-22) high priority needs ⁽⁹⁾	115

*See notes below

[#]Resource adjusted by supplementary and uncontrolled flow usage (refer above to State sharing of the Murray resource)

NSW Murray resource distribution 2020-21 – 1 March 2021



Data sheet notes

- (1) Total available resource - NSW's state share of active storage volume (Hume, Dartmouth, Menindee and Lake Victoria) as assessed and accounted for under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement at the time of the assessment plus any usable flows in transit plus assumed (99%) inflows for the rest of the year plus Snowy Hydro's assured Required Annual Release (RAR) (including any flex (pre-release) from the prior year), as well as estimated usage to date. Snowy Hydro's M1 releases to date for this water year (2020-21) is estimated to be about 880 GL. NSW is in Special Accounting with South Australia (SA), details of which can be found in the MDB Agreement clauses 123-129. Special accounting is triggered when forecasts indicate that NSW is unable to meet a required reserve of 1,250GL by the end of the water year.
- (2) Carryover – NSW Murray General Security water users can carryover a maximum account balance of 50% of their entitlement into the following water year. The account limit is 110% of entitlement, meaning that account credits from allocation and/or carryover cannot exceed 110% of entitlement in any water year. The limit does not include allocation trade.
- (3) Primarily rules-based planned environmental water (PEW) – water required to be set aside to provide for riverine environments, as per the Water Sharing Plan and other inter-jurisdictional agreements. In the NSW Murray this includes the Murray Additional Allowance (MAA) (about 6GL) and the Barmah-Millewa Allowance (B-MA) (about 344GL – currently 30 GL paid back, 314 GL remains borrowed). It also includes River Murray Increased Flows (RMIF) in Hume, accrued as part of the Snowy Water Initiative (currently 0GL). The total commitments to B-MA and RMIF will decrease over the water year if/when they are released from Hume for use. This item excludes 'licence-based' environmental water, also known as held environmental water (HEW).
- (4) The *Water Sharing Plan for the New South Wales Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016* has subcategories of High Security licences in the Murray Water Source. High Security subcategory licences under *Part 7 Division 2 Clause 46(2)* that are present in the Murray include community and education, research, and town water supply. At the commencement of each water year, these licences are to receive 100% allocation, while

remaining High Security licences are to receive 97% allocation. For the purposes of this water allocation statement, the High Security town water supply allocation volume has been grouped as “Towns, S&D”. Drought critical conveyance water allocated under Special Purpose Access Licences (SPAL) to small irrigation districts for running channels to supply high priority entitlements has been included in this category, totalling about 6GL.

- (5) Conveyance entitlement – a category of access licence originally issued to Irrigation Corporations to facilitate delivery of water through their channel systems. Allocation to this category is prescribed in the Water Sharing Plan and is a function of current High and General Security allocation.
- (6) Wakool Allowance – a conveyance volume necessary for NSW to operate the Edward-Wakool system. Typically up to 70 GL.
- (7) Reserves – required primarily under statutory plans, up to 61GL; set aside for critical human needs in accordance with Clause 11.03 of the Basin Plan.
- (8) Held environmental water (HEW) – water administered by environmental water holders is reported here, with the associated portions of general security allocation and carryover also identified in the above pie chart. This reporting of held environmental water is limited to only NSW entitlements, reporting of credits to accounts (not usage or trade), and estimated to be 243 GL of GS, 25 GL of HS, 35 GL of conveyance allocation and 35 GL of GS carryover. These entitlements are held and/or managed either singly or jointly by various environmental holder groups, including the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), The Living Murray (TLM) and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). Details on environmental holdings can be found on individual agency websites.
- (9) 2021-2022 high priority needs on 1 July 2021 - volume set aside to cover high priority needs on 1 July 2021, for ‘Year 2’, including potential carryover.

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