

10 January 2020

Namoi Valley

Water allocation update

There has been no change to allocations for any water licence categories. The valley has received its lowest rainfall total on record so far this water year along with record low inflows to the storages.

The system continues to experience its worst ever drought and resources are being managed to extend remaining supplies for critical needs. A temporary water restriction remains in operation below the storages to protect critical supplies.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Drought Stage
Upper Namoi Valley	75%	0%	 Stage 4
Lower Namoi Valley	75%	0%	 Stage 4

Keepit Dam is about 0.6% full, holding 9,300 megalitres (ML), and Split Rock Dam is about 0.8% full, holding about 6,500 ML.

These storages will need at least about 95,000 ML of combined inflow before normal regulated river operations can resume.

Key facts

- Higher priority users on Upper Namoi will get an intermittent (pulsed) regulated supply from Split Rock Dam over summer unless rainfall and inflows eventuate.
- Storage inflows since the last general security allocation in August 2017 have been just 39,000 ML. This is well below the previous minimum of 151,000 ML (August 2013 to December 2015).
- Upper and Lower Namoi general security water access license holders are restricted from accessing any water in their accounts.
- Trade within water sources is still permitted; however, any purchased restricted water will be transferred to a drought sub-account and remain restricted
- The restrictions will be eased or removed once the inflow situation improves sufficiently. The temporary water restriction can be viewed at <http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions>.

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduced a staged approach from one to four to manage extreme circumstances. Both the Upper Namoi and Lower Namoi are now at drought criticality level Stage 4. The maximum stage is reflecting the critical water shortage conditions where access to water must be prioritised for critical human needs and town water supplies.

Seasonal climate outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for January to March indicates that the catchment is likely to experience neither drier nor wetter than average conditions across the catchment. While outlooks for drier than average conditions have eased compared to those issued for late 2019, several months of above average rainfall would be needed to see a recovery from current long-term rainfall deficiencies. Both daytime and night-time temperatures over this period are very likely to be above average.

The Bureau indicates that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is expected to remain neutral at least till the end of autumn. The positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has also returned to neutral and is expected to remain neutral in the coming months, meaning it will have little influence on Australian climate. While the IOD has returned to neutral, it was the strongest positive IOD events to impact Australia in recent history, leaving its mark on the Australian landscape for bushfires and heatwaves this summer.

Details can be found in: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/outlooks/>

Further information

The next monthly water allocation statement for the Namoi regulated river water source will be available in early February 2020.