

14 January 2020

Macquarie and Cudgegong Valleys

Water allocation update

Allocations for the Macquarie-Cudgegong regulated river water sources **remain unchanged**.

The system continues to experience its worst ever drought and resources are being managed to extend remaining supplies for critical needs.

There was no inflow to Burrendong Dam during December 2019 and the total inflow since the last general security allocation in August 2017 has been just 94,300 ML. This is just 19% of the previous record low inflow for the 29 months ending in December.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Drought Stage
Cudgegong	70%	0%	 Stage 2
Macquarie	70%	0%	 Stage 4

A temporary water restriction remains in place below Burrendong Dam to limit water usage and protect critical supplies. Access to remaining water in general security carryover sub-accounts, including remaining EWA, has been restricted from 1 July 2019 until conditions improve.

Cudgegong regulated river access licences, including general security carryover, are not restricted, however no trading of water from above to below Burrendong Dam is permitted due to the critical water shortage downstream. Restrictions can only be eased when sufficient inflows to assure high priority needs for the 2020-21 water year are captured in storage. With dry conditions continuing, water users are advised to plan their programs accordingly and to maximise water use efficiency.

Operational drought contingency measures are now effective and aim to extend critical water supplies. Temporary works to raise Warren Weir are complete and deliveries downstream have ceased. Similarly, regulated releases into Duck Creek and Crooked Creek have ceased. Releases beyond Gunningbar Weir have ceased. Any access to flows downstream of Gunningbar Weir will be from naturally occurring (unregulated) flows, until the regulated river system recovers.

Businesses and landholders affected by these operational changes should be making alternative arrangements until regulated river operations can resume. Investigative works are being conducted to access inactive storage in Burrendong Dam. Additional drought contingency measures are being considered and may be needed to ensure town supplies and other critical needs can be met.

Storage levels (as at 10 January 2020)

- Burrendong is 1.8 per cent full – falling – currently holding 54,700 ML (20,700 ML active)
- Windamere is 27.4 per cent full – falling – currently holding 101,700 ML

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduced a staged approach to managing extreme events, such as severe droughts or poor water quality events. The Macquarie regulated river water source continues to experience a critical Stage 4 drought event. Contingency measures are being introduced to protect and extend critical water supplies for as long as possible.

The Cudgegong regulated water source advanced to Stage 2 on 1 July 2019, reflecting the restricted trade dealings and the reduced (70%) high security allocation.

For further details on current drought status please see detailed drought response advice available here: <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought>

Key facts

- If conditions remain dry, a further bulk water transfer will commence in February 2020, leaving a minimum of 70 GL in Windamere Dam upon completion. This is enough to secure supply for local demand in the regulated Cudgegong Valley for a number of years.
- Despite some water in accounts, there will be no delivery of water to some sections of the regulated Macquarie River, unless assisted by storms and unregulated tributary inflows. Water users should refer to WaterNSW for specific local delivery advice.
- Tributary flows downstream of Burrendong Dam will be managed adaptively to meet high priority commitments. Tributary flows, should they become available from passing storms, will be used to assist deliveries in regulated river sections, particularly for critical needs.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for February to April 2020 shows no strong tendency towards either wetter or drier than average conditions for the catchment, with day and night temperatures likely to be above average. 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.

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.

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

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement for the regulated Macquarie-Cudgegong Valley will be on **Wednesday 12 February 2020**.

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