

1 April 2021

NSW Murray and Lower Darling

Water allocation update

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

Rainfall in March over the headwater Murray catchments was limited and there has been a small improvement, some 10,000 megalitres (ML), in NSW Murray resource since the last assessment.

The improvement has been used to continue the pay back of the Barmah Millewa EWA (BMEWA) in accordance with the water sharing plan rules. The total account balance is currently around 344,000 ML, of which 40,000 ML has been paid back. Any future resource improvements this water year must be assigned to the BMEWA until the balance is fully repaid.

Resource managers must also plan to assure high priority commitments in 2021-22, therefore wet conditions will be needed if general security allocations are to resume incrementing this water year.

Flows downstream of Yarrowonga Weir for the past four years have been low. In accordance with the BMEWA rules, following four years of low flows, borrowing of the BMEWA in the fifth year is not automatically triggered. Instead NSW must *'consider, consult and justify'* before borrowing water in the fifth year. This process is underway and further advice will be provided as it comes to hand. Until then, as a precaution, water users should expect that a healthy share of resource improvement between now and October will accrue to the BMEWA pay-back to facilitate a forest watering in October.

The Menindee Lakes system is currently 17% full, holding around 300,000 ML. Inflows from recent rainfall in the northern Murray-Darling Basin are expected to accrue within the Menindee Lakes system over the next month or two. Flow forecasting is underway and will be advised and updated in due course. Once inflow volumes to the Menindee system are assured, resource assessments will be undertaken and allocation improvements announced. The Menindee resource becomes shared with other States when the system next holds more than 640,000 ML.

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, as further inflows are required to assure operability through the next water year. Drought criticality stage for the Lower Darling will be reassessed once current northern basin flows begin to accrue in the Menindee Lakes system.

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 31 March)*

- Dartmouth Dam is 64% full – steady – holding 2,455,000 ML.
- Hume Dam is 49% full – rising – holding 1,460,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 29% full – falling – holding 195,000 ML.

* The NSW share of this water is approximately 37%, 48% and 52% for these storages respectively, or 42% in total.

State sharing of the Murray resource

The bulk accounts assessment indicates that 4,120 gigalitres (GL) of total shared Murray resource is available in the extreme dry (99th percentile) case, of which about 690 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 1,610 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 1,885 GL**.

The bulk resource assessed by MDBA includes supplementary and uncontrolled flow diversion in the NSW usage. Therefore, the 2,005 GL assessed share of Murray resource must be reduced by 120 GL to 1,885 GL to account for water used from unregulated water sources. Note: the unregulated water usage does not adversely impact regulated allocations.

NSW is looking to collate publicly available resource information from other Murray jurisdictions and present it in future statements to assist NSW water users.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for April to June indicates that rainfall is likely to be around average across the catchment. Temperatures are also likely to be around average.

The Bureau's ENSO indicator has returned to inactive, with ENSO thresholds indicating neutral conditions. The Indian Ocean Dipole and Southern Annular Mode are also neutral.

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. There is no plan to change this long-standing trade arrangement despite challenges to river operations. Water users are advised 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 31 March 2021). Trade **into** the Murrumbidgee Valley is **open**. Water users should check with WaterNSW (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 **Thursday 15 April 2021**. It will include an indicative water availability outlook for the start of next water year (1 July 2021). The reliability of the indicative outlook will improve as the forecast period reduces.

The water availability outlook for next year aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions. Forecast conditions are best estimates only and do not guarantee water availability. They should be used with caution, particularly when projecting many months ahead.

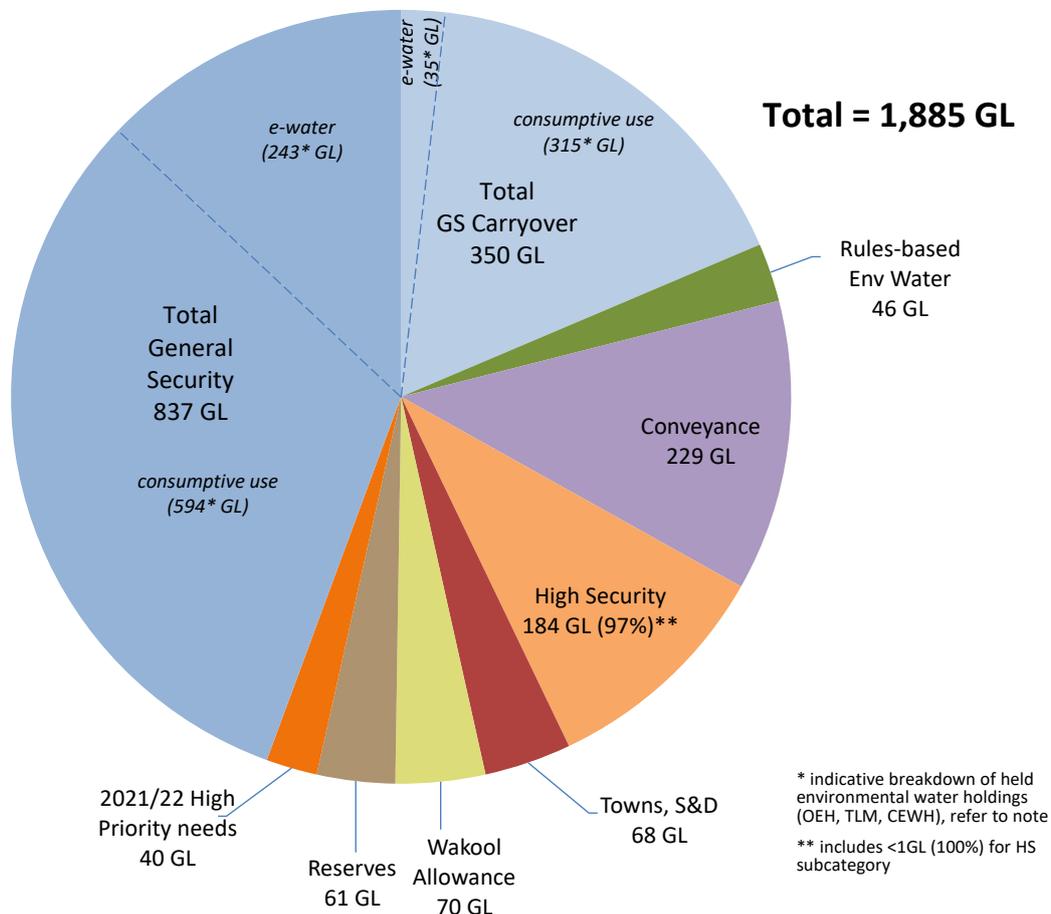
NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution* (1 April) for 2020-21	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	1,885 [#]
less	
Carryover ^{(2), (8)}	350
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽³⁾	46
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⁾	40

*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 April 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%ile) 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 has moved out of Special Accounting with South Australia (SA). The details of Special Accounting can be found in the MDB Agreement clauses 123-129. Special Accounting is triggered when forecasts indicate that NSW will have an end of year reserve of less than 1,250 GL.
- (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 40 GL paid back, 304 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 as they are released from Hume for use. Excludes 'licence-based' environmental water, 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 licenses 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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