

15 March 2017

## Murrumbidgee Valley

### Preliminary water availability outlook for 2017-18

#### Key information

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- This preliminary outlook for the likely 1 July 2017 water allocation conservatively assumes extreme dry conditions (99<sup>th</sup> percentile) for the remainder of the current (2016-17) water year. It also looks at possible wetter scenarios extending into 2017-18.
- The Murrumbidgee Valley has experienced very wet conditions this water year, with higher flows experienced in only 10 out of 100 years (10<sup>th</sup> percentile inflows). However, in the last two months conditions have been much drier with inflows well below the long-term average.
- It is difficult to reliably predict end-of-year carryover, as it is highly dependent on weather conditions over the next few months and individual decisions by water users. With the arrival of wet conditions late last year and full allocations, carryover is estimated to be close to the maximum allowable 30 per cent of entitlement, namely over 650,000 megalitres (ML).
- Access to inter-valley trade in 2017-18 is dependent on the balance of the IVT account. The 30 June balance will carry forward to 1 July and be made available for delivery in 2017-18.
- According to the Bureau of Meteorology, March is likely to be hotter and drier than average for the Murrumbidgee Valley, and these conditions are likely to continue through the remainder of autumn. The drier than average outlook likely stems from higher than normal air pressure forecasted across western and southern Australia, likely resulting in fewer rain-bearing systems crossing the region from west to east.
- The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) indicator remains neutral. However, recent changes in both the tropical Pacific Ocean and atmosphere, and climate model outlooks surveyed by the Bureau, suggest that the likelihood of El Niño conditions forming in 2017 has risen to about 50 per cent. El Niño is often associated with below average winter–spring rainfall over eastern Australia and warmer than average winter–spring maximum temperatures over the southern half of Australia
- Once the commencing allocations are announced on 1 July 2017, regular assessments will be undertaken and allocation announcements made fortnightly on the 1st and 15th of each month, or next working day following, as required for the remainder of the water year.
- An update to this preliminary forecast of water availability for 2017-18 will be made on 15 May 2017.

#### Indicative allocations on 1 July 2017

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- Full allocation can be expected for all towns, as well as domestic and stock access licences.
- Private carryover will be fully deliverable. At this early stage, it is estimated that the average carryover across the valley will be close to the maximum 30 per cent of entitlement.
- Murrumbidgee High Security access licences will receive an initial allocation of 95 per cent of entitlement, consistent with the Murrumbidgee regulated river water sharing plan.
- Under 'extreme dry' inflow conditions (99<sup>th</sup> percentile) through to the end of this (2016-17) water year, there will be 9 per cent commencing general security allocation on 1 July.

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- A 9 per cent allocation, together with 30 per cent carryover, means an average general security water availability on 1 July of 39 per cent of entitlement.
- Water will be allocated to conveyance licences, commensurate with the opening general security allocation.
- Supplementary access licence holders will receive a full allocation; however, as usual, diversion is only allowed during periods of announced supplementary access.
- Water in Environmental Water Allowances (EWA) accounts will be available in accordance with the rules of the water sharing plan.
- In the Murrumbidgee water source, general security and conveyance licences can carry over water up to a maximum of 30 per cent of entitlement, and the account limit (allocation plus carryover) is 100 per cent of entitlement.
- Murrumbidgee inter and intra valley trade will operate in accordance with existing procedures and protocols, particularly in relation to the inter-valley trade (IVT) account limits.
- Releases from headwater storages will be managed to maximise water availability and deliverability including equalising their risk of spill.

### Chances of improvement

The chances of improved general security allocation based on different inflow conditions into 2017-18 are as follows:

#### Forecast general security allocation (per cent)<sup>#</sup>

Potential Inflow Conditions <sup>##</sup>	1 Sept 2017	1 Nov 2017
99 chances in 100 (extreme) (99%)	9	9
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	15	25
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	21	35
1 chance in 2 (mean) (50%)	33	47*
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%) <sup>^</sup>	44	50*

<sup>##</sup> Multi-history modelling using all years on record.

<sup>^</sup> The 2016-17 water year to date has experienced very wet conditions (10th percentile) due largely to spring floods.

<sup>#</sup> Assumes an average carryover of 30%.

\* Under average and wetter conditions and elevated allocations, peak demand deliverability (Tumut channel capacity constraints) could become problematic. Monitoring for such conditions will be maintained to ensure early warning and appropriate action.