

1 October 2019

NSW Murray and Lower Darling

Water allocation update

General Security allocations in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated river water sources remain unchanged.

Rainfall continues to trend well below average and inflows into the River Murray System for September are in the lowest 5 per cent of historical record. Nevertheless the forecast end of September assessment shows a small increase in resource since the last assessment of 30,000 megalitres (ML) for the NSW Murray.

This improvement has been assigned to complete the critical human needs obligation, some 24,000 ML, in accordance with the Basin Plan with the balance, some 6,000 ML, increasing the allocation to Conveyance entitlement from 80,000 ML to 86,000 ML toward its 165,000 ML target.

Winter and spring are historically the wetter seasons for the southern basin. As winter has passed with inflows well below average, and spring is forecast to be drier than average, the chances of substantial water resource improvements are diminishing. Therefore resource managers must also be looking forward to 2020-21 with each assessment to ensure high priority needs can be met.

The Menindee Lakes system remains critical; below 1 per cent full, holding just 13,000 ML. Information on Lower Darling drought contingency measures is provided in the Drought stage section below. The widespread cease-to-flow conditions pose significant challenges and risks, particularly as conditions warm up in spring and summer.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage
Murray	97%	0%	18%	 Stage 2
Lower Darling	30%	0%	19%	 Stage 4

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy facilitates a staged approach to managing extreme events, such as severe droughts or poor water quality events.

The **NSW Murray** regulated river water source is in Stage 2 drought criticality. Drought operational planning has commenced with extreme dry conditions elevating the risk of resource shortfall. A Critical Water Advisory Panel has been formed for southern valleys to provide advice on drought management options and will convene as required, in conjunction with public drought meetings.

The **Lower Darling** regulated river water source is at maximum Stage 4 drought criticality, with no foreseeable inflows and restrictions limiting usage to critical needs. Measures include:

- A temporary water restriction that took effect on 4 December 2018, and was renewed on 1 July 2019 for 2019-20, to restrict water use to town water supply, domestic use, stock watering and permanent plantings.
- Broken Hill's water supply needs are now being met from the Murray using the Wentworth to Broken Hill pipeline.

- Essential Water's supply from Copi Hollow to provide for Menindee and Sunset Strip is nearing depletion.
- Flow from Weir 32 into the Lower Darling stopped in mid-February 2019.
- Access to water along the Lower Darling is from pools created by temporary banks. The remaining water supplies are unlikely to provide adequate water over another summer.
- Lake Wetherell is likely to be empty in early February 2020.

The temporary water restriction is likely to remain until resources improve in the Menindee system. Follow this link for further details on the reasons for the temporary restriction:

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions

More information on NSW's Extreme Events Policy and related drought stages can be found at: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/extreme-events

Storage levels (as at 29 September 2019)*

- Dartmouth Dam is 58 per cent full – falling – holding 2,237,000 ML.
- Hume Dam is 42 per cent full – falling – holding 1,251,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 83 per cent full – falling – holding 563,000 ML.

* NSW share of this water is approximately 28%, 49% and 29% for these storages respectively, or 35% in total.

State sharing of the Murray resource

The forecast end of September accounts indicate that 4,490 gigalitres (GL) of total shared Murray resource is available in the extreme dry (99th percentile) case, of which about 1,880 GL is needed to run the system. The NSW portion of this shared resource is 860 GL based on rules in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Following adjustments including trade, tributary inflows and usage to date, the assessment results in 790 GL of water being available for NSW.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for October to December indicates that the Murray catchment is very likely to experience drier than average conditions. Daytime temperatures are very likely to be above average, while overnight temperatures are likely to be below average.

The Bureau indicates that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remains neutral. Modelling suggests that the ENSO is likely to remain neutral over the remainder of 2019. Positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions are forecast for the remainder of spring. A positive IOD will likely result in below average spring rainfall and above average temperatures.

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 opened on 1 July with the balance of Snowy water savings volume that would not be delivered downstream; however, that initial trade capacity has now been consumed and downstream trade in 2019-20 will open to the extent of the volume of any upstream trade.

The trade restriction helps to protect existing downstream entitlement holders from an increased risk of delivery shortfall due to the limited physical capacity of the Barmah Choke.

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.

The Menindee Lakes system is effectively empty. Temporary trade with the Murray is closed and typically remains closed until the system recovers to above 640 GL and becomes part of the shared Murray system. Trade within the Lower Darling water source is allowed although there is no regulated water delivery.

Trade **into** the Murrumbidgee Valley is open; however, trade **out** is closed. Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website (www.waternsw.com.au) for daily information about the IVT account balance and status of trade.

Next announcement

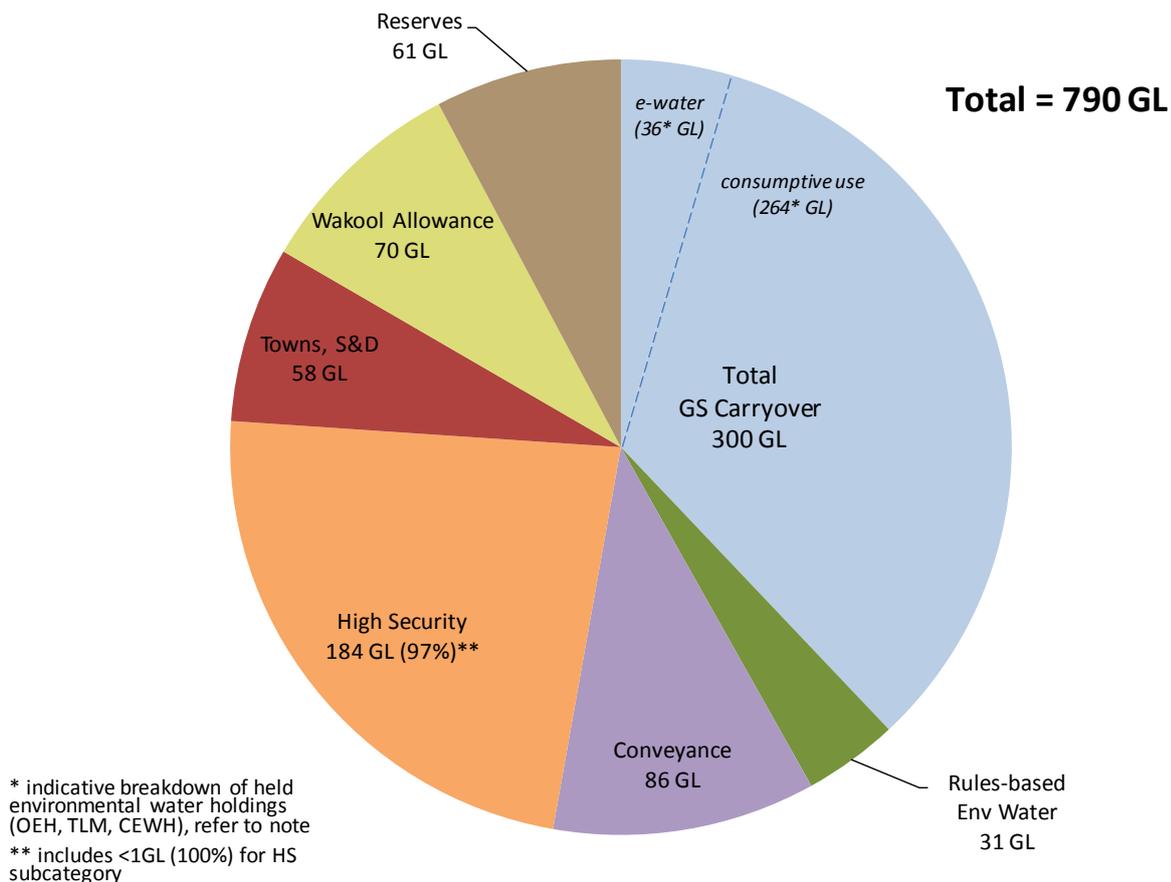
The next water allocation statement for the NSW Murray and Lower Darling valleys will be on **Tuesday 15 October 2019**. It will include updated probability analysis showing likely improvement in water availability under different inflow scenarios.

NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution (1 October) for 2019-20	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	790
less	
Carryover ^{(2), (8)}	300
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽³⁾	31
Towns, Stock, Domestic ⁽⁴⁾	58 (100%)
Announced High Security subcategory ⁽⁴⁾	<1 (100%)
Announced High Security ⁽⁴⁾	184 (97%)
Conveyance ⁽⁵⁾	86 (26%)
Wakool Allowance ⁽⁶⁾	70
Reserves ⁽⁷⁾	61
Announced General Security ⁽⁸⁾	0 (0%)
2020-21 high priority needs ⁽⁹⁾	0

**See notes below.*

NSW Murray resource distribution 2019-20 – 1 October 2019



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 (2019-20) is estimated to be about 358GL. 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 the required reserve of 1,250GL by the end of the water year to supply SA with its entitlement in the following year.
- (2) Carryover – NSW Murray general security water users can carryover a maximum account balance of 50 per cent of their entitlement into the following water year. The account limit is 110 per cent 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 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 274GL – currently 100% borrowed). It also includes River Murray Increased Flows (RMIF) in Hume, accrued as part of the Snowy Water Initiative (currently about 25GL). 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”.
- (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 0GL of GS, 24GL of HS, 13GL of conveyance allocation and 36GL of GS carryover. These entitlements are held and/or managed either singly or jointly by various environmental holder groups, including the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), The Living Murray (TLM) and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). Details on environmental holdings can be found on individual agency websites.
- (9) 2020-2021 high priority needs on 1 July 2020 - volume set aside to cover high priority needs on 1 July 2020, for ‘Year 2’, including potential carryover

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