

07 January 2020

## Richmond Valley

### Allocations

This Water Allocation Statement for the Richmond regulated river water source is being published to update users on the emerging drought risk and decreasing water availability in the catchment.

Allocations for all water users including for general security licence holders in the Richmond regulated river water source commenced the 2019-20 water year with 100 per cent of entitlement.

The last five months to November 2019 has seen much lower than average rainfall in the catchment, with Toonumbar Dam receiving just 15.6 mm of rainfall in the period, resulting in net inflows into the dam of just 75 megalitres (ML), compared with the median inflow for this period of over 2,000 ML.

The anticipated inflows have not eventuated due to the very dry conditions, therefore the deliverability of account water, particularly for general security water users, is being re-assessed. It may be necessary to introduce drought management strategies in early 2020 so that water for high priority needs including town water supplies can be secured if conditions do not improve in coming weeks.

### Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduced a staged approach from one to four to manage extreme circumstances such as severe droughts or poor water quality events in the Murray-Darling Basin. As the drought has extended beyond the Basin and into coastal valleys, regulated coastal rivers are now being reported on the drought map on the DPIE website.

The Richmond Valley has been escalated to Stage 2 criticality indicating that there is a risk of an emerging water shortage. Contingency measures may be required in 2020 to protect high priority water needs.

Further information on drought stages can be found at:

[www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/extreme-events](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/extreme-events)

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Drought Stage
Richmond Valley	100%	100%	 Stage 2

### Dam levels (as at 23 December 2019)

Toonumbar Dam is 25 per cent full – falling – holding about 2,900 megalitres (ML). This time last year the storage was about 96 per cent full.

### Key facts

- Well below average rainfall in the catchment in the July 2019 to November 2019 period.
- Toonumbar Dam received a net inflow of 75.3 ML in the July 2019 to November 2019 period which is less than about 4 per cent of the median inflow for this period.
- The department is exploring drought contingency measures to preserve water for high priority needs, including town water supplies, in case dry conditions continue.

### Seasonal climate outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for January 2020 to March 2020 shows neither drier nor wetter than average conditions for this catchment, but likely above average temperatures.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is neutral and is expected to remain neutral into early 2020. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) remains active but is weakening and likely to dissipate by mid-summer. A positive IOD typically usually means drier than average conditions for southern and central Australia. The negative Southern Annular Mode (SAM) is expected to continue into early January, tending to produce drier conditions to parts of eastern Australia.

For further details: [www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/rainfall/summary](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/rainfall/summary)

### Further information

A water allocation statement for the Richmond valley is published annually on 1 July, and updated when water availability conditions change and potentially impact water allocations. The extreme dry conditions have prompted this statement so that water users know that conditions are being closely monitored and that drought contingency measures may need to be implemented in 2020.

**The next water allocation statement** and update for the Richmond regulated river **will be in late January 2020** after water availability conditions in January have been re-assessed.

Information on available water determinations and water sharing plans is available on the Department of Industry website - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water)

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