

13 February 2020

Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source

Water allocation update

Allocations for the Macquarie-Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source **remain unchanged**.

The system continues to experience its worst ever drought and resources continue to be managed to extend remaining supplies for critical needs. Less than 30 millimetres of patchy rain has fallen across Burrendong Dam and Windamere catchments over the past week. More intense and sustained rainfall is required to reverse drought impacts and enable the lifting of water restrictions.

There was some minor inflow of about 2,000 megalitres (ML) into Burrendong Dam during January 2020 with no improvement in Windamere storage. The total inflow into Burrendong since the last general security allocation in August 2017 has been just 96,300 ML. This is less than one-fifth of the previous record low inflow for the 30 months ending in January.

| 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. In the meantime water users are advised to remain vigilant and maximise their water use efficiency.

Some welcome rainfall in downstream catchments from mid-January has produced about 7,000 ML of tributary flows below Burrendong Dam. Tributary flows surplus to water orders have been managed under the tributary flow management plan, while providing access to meet the critical needs of the environment in some sections of the river. Temporary drought works at Warren Weir, Gunningbar Weir and Duck Creek offtake have been removed to deliver much needed stock and domestic supplies and replenish river pools. The recent rainfall and small flows has also allowed deferral of the commencement of the planned Buk Water Transfer to late February or early March.

Despite some minor relief, businesses and landholders affected by the operational changes needed to deal with severe water shortages should be continuing with their arrangements until normal regulated river operations can resume. Works continue to be readied to access inactive storage in Burrendong Dam should that become necessary and additional drought contingency measures may be needed to ensure town supplies and other critical needs can be met.

Storage levels (as at 10 February 2020)

- Burrendong Dam is 1.5 per cent full – rising – currently at 51,300 ML (17,274 ML active)
- Windamere Dam is 26.5 per cent full – steady – currently at 98,200 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 implemented to protect and extend critical water supplies for as long as possible.

The Cudgegong Regulated River 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 late February or early March 2020, leaving a minimum of 70 GL in Windamere Dam upon completion. This is enough to secure supply for local regulated Cudgegong demands 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 from passing storms downstream of Burrendong Dam will be managed adaptively to meet high priority commitments, including effluent replenishments where possible.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for March to June 2020 indicates the likelihood of a wetter or drier than average autumn (March to May) is roughly equal for much of Australia. However, parts of the northern Murray-Darling Basin have a slightly increased chance of being drier than average. Both daytime and overnight temperatures for autumn (March to May) are likely to be above average across Australia.

With major climate drivers neutral, local or short-term climate drivers such as sea surface temperatures around Australia, and active or break periods of the monsoon, are likely to have a greater influence on rainfall and temperature patterns. Details can be found in: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/outlooks/>

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement for the Macquarie-Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Source will be on **Wednesday 11 March 2020**.

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