

1 February 2019

NSW Murray and Lower Darling

Water allocation update

Current allocations in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated river water sources **remain unchanged**.

Conditions in January have been mostly hot and dry, with temperatures exceeding 40°C for extended periods. Unsurprisingly, Murray monthly system inflows have been tracking hundreds of gigalitres below average, and less than last year's inflows. The improvement in NSW resource is just 5,000 megalitres (ML) and this has been set aside for future high priority needs.

The Menindee Lakes system is critically low at 2.4 per cent full, holding just 41,700 ML. Remaining supplies are restricted to critical needs only. Small releases are being maintained from Lake Wetherell for Menindee and the Lower Darling, while water from Copi Hollow is being used to supply Broken Hill. Widespread low and zero flow conditions, combined with extreme summer weather, are creating significant water quality challenges.

Additional information on Lower Darling drought contingency measures is provided in the 'drought stage' section below.

2018-19	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage
Murray	97%	0%	31%	 Stage 1
Lower Darling	100%	0%	15%	 Stage 4

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduces 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 1 drought, meaning it can deliver all account water under normal river operations. Although next year's (2019/20) high priority commitments are not yet fully assured, water is expected from autumn and winter inflows.

The Lower Darling regulated river water source is at maximum Stage 4 drought criticality, with restrictions limiting access to water for critical needs only. A temporary water restriction took effect on 4 December 2018, which restricts use to town water supply, domestic use, stock watering, permanent plantings and some limited high security water from Copi Hollow. This restriction will remain until resources improve in the Menindee system. Further details on the reasons for the temporary restriction are available at: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions

Operational updates on Lower Darling drought measures can be found in WaterNSW's state-wide weekly water availability reports: www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/availability

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

Murray storage levels (as at 31 January 2019)*

- Dartmouth Dam is 67 per cent full – falling – holding 2,585,000 ML.
- Hume Dam is 33 per cent full – falling – holding 977,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 60 per cent full – falling – holding 403,000 ML.

* NSW share of this water is approximately 23%, 49% and 47% for these storages respectively.

State sharing of the Murray resource

The monthly forecast end of January accounts indicate 4,570 gigalitres (GL) of total Murray resource is available in the very dry (99 percentile) case, of which about 1,140 GL is needed to run the system and therefore 3,430 GL is distributed to NSW and Victoria based on rules in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

The NSW share of this is about 1,170 GL from which commitments to South Australia's entitlement flow and trade adjustments are deducted to leave NSW with 1,125 GL of resource to distribute (99 percentile). This is an increase of 5 GL from the last assessment.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for February to April shows no clear indication of drier or wetter conditions. Temperatures are likely to continue above average.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) Outlook has changed to El Niño WATCH, with recent observations and models suggesting that the immediate risk of El Niño has passed. Although main climate drivers remain neutral, there remains about a 50 per cent chance of El Niño developing in autumn or winter.

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. 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 below 480 GL, the threshold at which the Lower Darling becomes administratively separated from the Murray. Temporary trade with the Murray is therefore closed and typically remains closed until the system recovers to above 640GL. Trade within the Lower Darling water source is allowed.

Trade **out** and **within** the Murrumbidgee Valley is open, but trade **into** the Murrumbidgee Valley is closed. Trade into the Murrumbidgee Valley will re-open when the Murrumbidgee

inter-valley trade (IVT) account balance climbs to 15 GL. Water users are encouraged to 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 issued on **Friday 15 February 2019**.

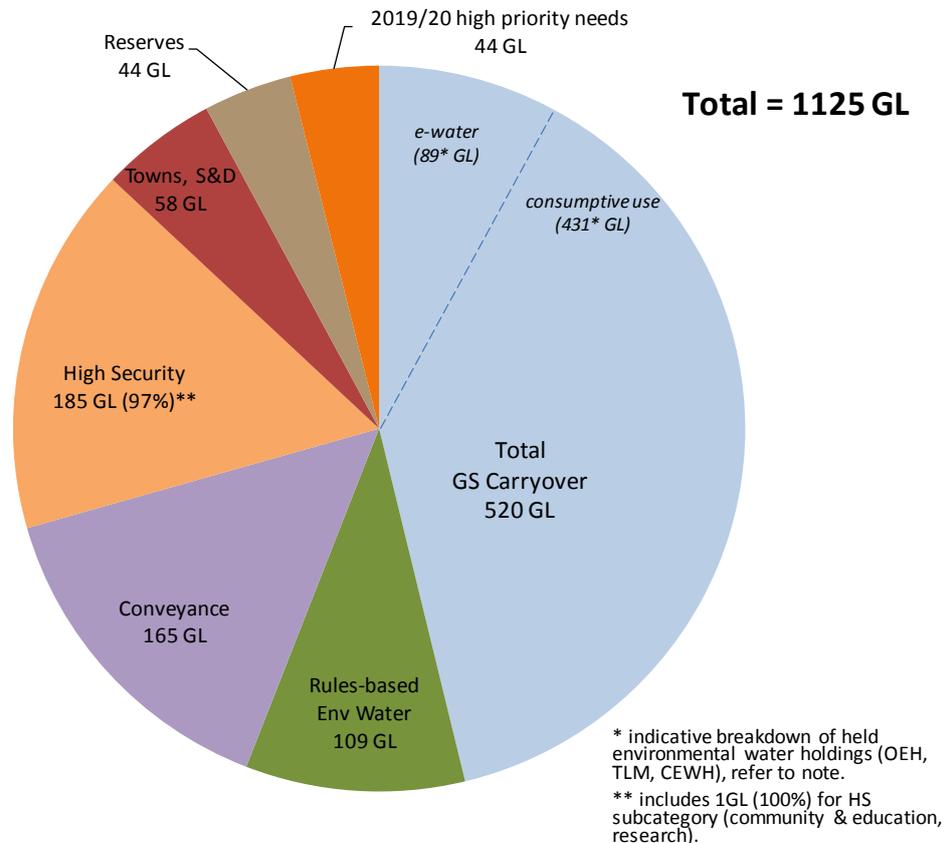
From mid-February, mid-monthly statements will provide indicative 1 July 2019 allocations as the new water year approaches. This aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions – whether to use, trade or carryover their account balances. However, forecast conditions are best estimates only and not guaranteed water availability. They should be used with caution, particularly when they project many months ahead.

NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution (1 February) for 2018-19	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	1,125
less	
Carryover ^{(2), (7)}	520
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽³⁾	109
Towns, Stock, Domestic ⁽⁴⁾	58 (100%)
Announced High Security subcategory (education, research) ⁽⁴⁾	1 (100%)
Announced High Security ⁽⁴⁾	184 (97%)
Conveyance ⁽⁵⁾	165 (50%)
Reserves ⁽⁶⁾	44
Announced General Security ⁽⁷⁾	0 (0%)
2019-20 high priority needs ⁽⁸⁾	44

**See notes below.*

NSW Murray resource distribution 2018-19 – 1 February 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 net M1 releases to date for this water year (2018-19) is estimated to be about 673GL, and 200GL of flex was pre-released in 2017-18. NSW remains 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 NSW is forecast 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 – water required to be set aside to provide for riverine environments, as per water sharing plan and other interjurisdictional agreements. In the NSW Murray this includes the Murray Additional Allowance (MAA) (about 6GL), Wakool system requirements (up to 70GL, currently 40GL available), and the Barmah-Millewa Allowance (B-MA) (about 261GL – currently 100% borrowed). It also includes River Murray Increased Flows (RMIF) in Hume, accrued as part of the Snowy Water Initiative (currently 63GL). 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 also 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) 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.
 - (7) 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, 25GL of conveyance allocation and 89GL 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.
 - (8) 2019-20 high priority needs on 1 July 2019 - at this time of year, it is necessary to look ahead to ensure there is sufficient resource set aside to meet high priority needs on 1 July 2019, for 'Year 2', including potential carryover. This volume will be determined at each assessment and will change as estimates of end of year usage and carryover become more certain, and as weather conditions unfold in coming months.

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