

6 December 2019

Namoi Valley

Water availability and allocation update

The Namoi Valley has received the lowest rainfall on record so far this water year. Namoi storage inflows have been well below minimum. Moreover, this continued dry weather has caused upper Namoi transmission losses to exceed 200 per cent, meaning that it takes on average 3 megalitres of water released from storage to meet each megalitre of water ordered.

The extreme inflow and loss conditions have made it necessary to restrict access to remaining general security account water to make savings for high priority commitments, particularly water supply security for Barraba and Manilla, until conditions improve.

A Temporary Water Restriction Order has been made under section 324(1) of the *Water Management Act 2000* to prohibit access from today to general security water users in the Upper Namoi Regulated River Water Source. The prohibition does not apply to the take of water for testing metering equipment of up to a total of 1 megalitre (ML) for pumps larger than 500 mm and 0.5 ML for all other works.

Upper Namoi drought criticality stands at the maximum Stage 4 to reflect the critical water shortage conditions unfolding. Allocations **remain unchanged** for all water licence categories.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Drought Stage
Upper Namoi Valley	75%	0%	 Stage 4
Lower Namoi Valley	75%	0%	 Stage 4

Keepit Dam is less than 0.7 per cent full, holding 9,700 ML, while Split Rock Dam is about 1 per cent full, holding about 7,200 ML.

These storages will need at least 90,000 ML of combined inflow before normal regulated river operations can resume.

Key facts

- High priority users on the Upper Namoi can liaise with WaterNSW about an intermittent (pulsed) supply from Split Rock Dam over summer, unless conditions ease with rainfall and inflows.
- Storage inflows since the last general security allocation in August 2017 have been just 39,000 ML. This is well below the previous record low of 149,000 ML (August 2013 to November 2015).
- No delivery from Keepit Dam has been possible this calendar year due to low water levels.
- Upper and Lower Namoi general security water access license holders are now restricted from accessing any water in their accounts.

- Trade within water sources is still permitted; however, any purchased restricted water will be transferred to a drought sub-account and remain restricted.
- The restrictions will be eased or removed once the inflow situation improves sufficiently. The temporary water restriction can be viewed at - www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions

Drought stage

The NSW Extreme Events Policy introduced a staged approach from one to four to manage extreme circumstances. Both the Upper Namoi and Lower Namoi are now at drought criticality level Stage 4. The maximum stage is reflecting the critical water shortage conditions where access to water must be prioritised for critical human needs and town water supplies.

Seasonal climate outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for December 2019 to February 2020 indicates that the Namoi catchment is likely to experience drier than average conditions. Both daytime and night-time temperatures over this period are very likely to be above average.

The Bureau indicates that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) will remain neutral until early 2020. The strong positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) continues to influence Australia's weather, but has weakened over the past four weeks. A positive IOD will likely result in below average rainfall and above average temperatures.

Details can be found at - www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead/outlooks/

Further information

The next monthly water allocation statement for the Namoi regulated river water source will be available in mid-January 2020; however, conditions will continue to be closely monitored.

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Water Allocation Statement

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