

15 March 2019

Murrumbidgee Valley

Water allocation update

Murrumbidgee regulated river water source general security allocation **remains unchanged at 7 per cent of entitlement.**

Tributary flows have been minimal since the last assessment, with inflows continuing to track well below average. Despite hot and dry conditions a minor 10,000 megalitre (ML) improvement has occurred due to account reconciliation and reduced delivery losses.

This improvement has been set aside to meet 1 July 2019 high priority commitments. Currently an additional 130,000 ML is needed to assure these commitments before further allocation can be made to general security entitlements.

Recent increases in the Blowering Dam storage level is due to Snowy Hydro releases rather than natural tributary inflows.

A preliminary outlook for 2019-20 opening allocations has been provided further below.

2018-19	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage
Murrumbidgee	95%	7%	22%	 Stage 1

Storage levels (as at 14 March 2019)

- Blowering Dam is 26 per cent full – falling – holding 443,000 ML.
- Burrinjuck Dam is 31 per cent full – falling – holding 318,000 ML.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for April to June shows no clear indication of drier or wetter conditions for a majority of the catchment, however parts of the mid-Murrumbidgee catchment is likely to be drier than average. Temperatures are also very likely to be warmer than average.

The Bureau's ENSO Outlook is currently at El Niño WATCH, meaning there is a 50% chance of El Niño developing from autumn; this is double the normal chance.

For further details: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/rainfall/summary

Drought stage

The NSW extreme events policy introduces a staged approach to managing extreme events such as severe droughts or poor water quality events. Currently, the Murrumbidgee Valley is in Stage 1, meaning it can deliver all account water under normal regulated river operations.

Although next year's (2019-20) high priority commitments are not yet fully assured, inflows to satisfy them would normally arrive over autumn and winter.

Further information on the policy and related drought stages can be found at:
<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/extreme-events>

Trade

Water allocation can currently be traded **within** and **out** of the Murrumbidgee Valley, but trade **into** the Murrumbidgee Valley remains closed. Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website (www.waternsw.com.au) for information about the Murrumbidgee inter-valley trade (IVT) account balance and the status of trade.

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement will be issued on **Monday, 1 April 2019**. It will be an abbreviated statement to confirm conditions and keep water users updated.

A water availability outlook for the start of next water year (1 July 2019) is reported in this Statement and will continue to be updated on a monthly basis until mid-May as the new water year approaches.

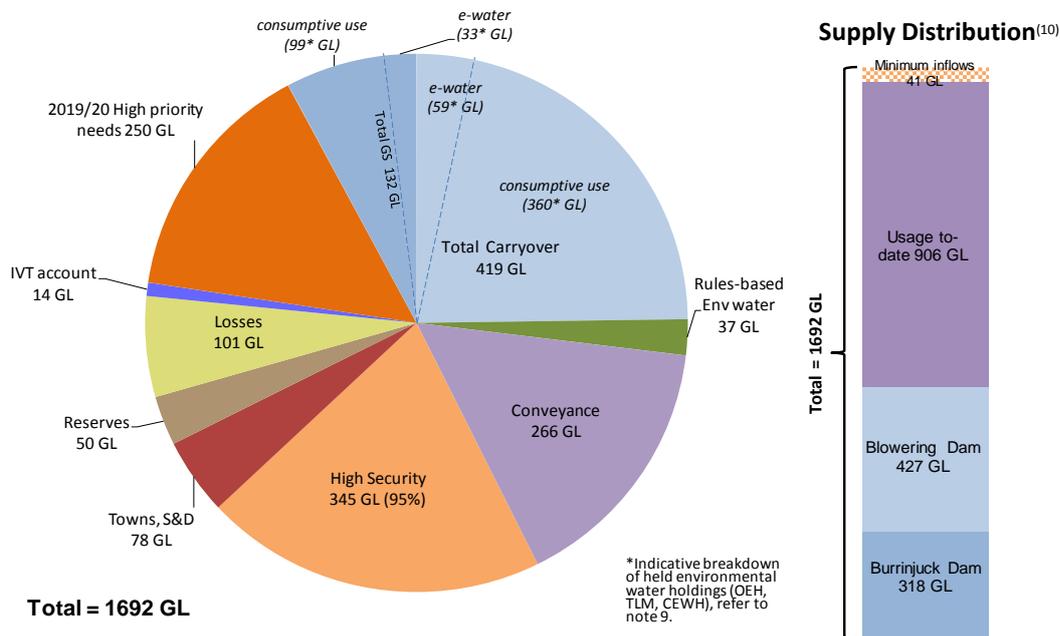
Forecasts intend to help water users with their end of year water management decisions – whether to use, trade or carryover their account balances. However, forecast conditions are best estimates only and not guaranteed. They should be used with caution, particularly when they project many months ahead. The reliability of the outlook is expected to improve as the forecast period reduces.

Murrumbidgee resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution 2018-19 (at 15 March 2019)	
	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	1,692
less	
Carryover (GS and Conveyance)	419
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽²⁾	37
Towns, Stock, Domestic	78 (100%)
Reserves ⁽³⁾	50
Conveyance ⁽⁴⁾	266
Announced High Security	345 (95%)
Losses (transmission, evaporation, operational) ⁽⁵⁾	101
Murrumbidgee IVT account (carryover as of 1 July) ⁽⁶⁾	14
Late Season Inflows ⁽⁷⁾	0
Announced General Security	132 (7%)
Future (2019-20) high priority needs ⁽⁸⁾	250

*See notes below.

Murrumbidgee resource distribution 2018-19 – 15 March 2019



Notes

- 1) Total available resource – total active storage volume (Blowering & Burrinjuck Dams) at the day of assessment plus any usable flows in transit plus drought inflows for 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 Jounama Release for this year (2018-19) to date is estimated to be about 740GL, and 200GL of flex release was pre-released in 2017-18.
- 2) Rules-based environmental water – water required to be set aside under water sharing plans to provide for riverine environments. Includes end-of-system flow requirements (currently 37GL) and environmental water allowances (EWA1 = nil, EWA2 = nil, EWA3 = nil). Excludes 'licence-based' environmental water also known as held environmental water (HEW). This total volume typically reduces as commitments are met and water is used during the year.
- 3) Reserves – reserved primarily under statutory plans, and mainly used for emergency purposes and critical needs. Includes 25GL per dam as an operational reserve, and Provisional Storage Volumes (PSV1 = nil, PSV2 = nil).
- 4) 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 plans and is a function of high and general security allocations. (This category of licence in the Murrumbidgee valley, like general security, can carry over up to 30% of entitlement).
- 5) Losses – is the best estimate of the volume required to run the river under dry conditions to meet demands for the remainder of the water year. This includes storage evaporation, transmission losses and operational loss. This estimate is regularly updated as the year unfolds.
- 6) IVT account – this represents the carryover value into 2018-19. As the account status was negative on 1 July 2018, meaning Murray water was 'owed' to the Murrumbidgee that could not be delivered, this volume of 14GL was set aside from allocation in the Murrumbidgee. The impact on all Murrumbidgee water users of a negative IVT balance is resolved by those who trade **out** of the valley during the water year, thereby lifting the IVT balance. There is currently a small positive balance (2.3GL).
- 7) Late Season Inflows – is the estimated inflow volume that will arrive into storage late in the year, after the peak irrigation demand season (usually post-February). This water cannot be allocated to water users at the start of the water-year, otherwise there could be an expectation that the water is available for delivery and use before it is captured in storage.
- 8) Future high priority needs – it is required to look ahead to next water year (2019-20) to ensure there is sufficient resource available to meet high priority commitments on 1 July. This volume is currently estimated to be about 380GL of which 250GL has been met. This value changes from month to month based on the complex interaction of climatic factors, projected historical inflow sequence, usage/potential carryover, and actual transmission and operational losses as the water year unfolds.
- 9) Held environmental water (HEW) – licenced 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 the total credited to accounts (not usage) and is estimated to be 33GL of GS, 12GL of HS, 37GL of conveyance allocation and 51GL of GS carryover and 8GL conveyance 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.

- 10) Supply Distribution – the distribution of supply includes volumes at the time of the assessment for the following categories: active volumes in the dams (excludes early release volumes of next year's Snowy Hydro commitments), indicative usage to-date (may be estimates prior to reconciliation with hydrographic updates) and assumed minimum future inflows (includes Snowy Hydro's guaranteed inflows for the water year, and late season inflows).

Preliminary water availability outlook for 2019-20

Key information

- This preliminary outlook is a repeat of the information provided in the 15 February 2019 statement.
- As the NSW caretaker period has commenced in the lead-up to the NSW election, additional detail on the preliminary outlook will be released after the caretaker period has ceased.
- This preliminary outlook for 1 July 2019 Murrumbidgee water availability is conservatively based on assumed extreme dry (99th percentile) inflow conditions for the remainder of this water year, and all of 2019-20.
- For context, the Murrumbidgee valley has experienced between 'very dry' and 'extreme dry' (96th percentile) July to February inflows this year. Only four out of 100 years in the historical record have experienced drier conditions.
- This forecast information is not guaranteed and should be used at one's own risk. It can be expected to become more reliable as the forecast period reduces.
- Although extreme dry conditions are assumed to continue, heavy rainfall and significant inflows can occur at any time, and allocations will be promptly adjusted accordingly.
- In the Murrumbidgee water source, general security and conveyance licences can carry over water up to a maximum of 30 per cent of entitlement, and the account limit (allocation plus carryover) is 100 per cent of entitlement.
- It is difficult to reliably predict end-of-year carryover, as it is highly dependent on weather conditions over the next few months and individual decisions by water users.
- Access to inter-valley trade in 2019-20 is dependent on the balance of the IVT account. The 30 June balance will carry forward unchanged to 1 July 2019.
- BoM's rainfall forecast indicates possibly drier and likely warmer than average conditions over the next three months from April to June.
- Once the commencing allocations are announced on 1 July 2019, regular assessments will be undertaken and allocation announcements made fortnightly on the 1st and 15th of each month, or next working day following, until full allocations are achieved.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2019

- Full (100 per cent) allocation can be expected for towns, domestic and stock access licences, and sub-category high security entitlements.
- Supplementary (including Lowbidgee) access licence holders will receive a full allocation; however diversion is only allowed during periods of announced supplementary access.
- Private carryover will be fully deliverable. At this early stage, it is estimated that the average carryover across the valley will be close to five per cent of entitlement.
- Murrumbidgee high security access licences will receive an initial allocation of 95 per cent of entitlement, consistent with the Murrumbidgee regulated river water sharing plan.
- For 1 July, some reduced allocation to conveyance entitlements is possible in the unlikely event that a shortfall emerges from extreme dry conditions. Conditions are being closely monitored and updates will be provided.
- There will be no commencing general security allocation for 2019-20 under extreme dry inflow conditions.
- Revised outlooks will be provided monthly, and should become more reliable as the forecast period reduces.
- Water in Environmental Water Allowances (EWA) accounts will be available and accrue in accordance with the rules of the water sharing plan.
- Murrumbidgee inter and intra valley trade will operate in accordance with existing procedures, particularly in relation to the inter-valley trade (IVT) account limits.
- Releases from headwater storages will be managed to maximise water availability and deliverability including equalising the risk of spill from headwater storages.