

1 April 2020

## NSW Murray and Lower Darling

### Water allocation update

This abbreviated statement updates water availability information and confirms that **general security** allocations in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated river water sources **remain unchanged**.

While above average rainfall was received in early March, there has been little rainfall in the past two weeks, resulting in **no change to the NSW Murray resource**. Overall dry conditions continue to strain resources; therefore, the system is being managed to maintain deliverability of all account water and support full opening allocations to high priority needs in 2020-21, including general security carryover, as required by the statutory water sharing plan.

The Menindee Lakes system has experienced significant resource improvement due to the arrival of northern basin inflows. It is currently 12 per cent full, holding around 210,000 ML and will continue to rise over the coming weeks. As a result, **Local Water Utility, Domestic and Stock, and High Security** licences in the **Lower Darling water source** can now be increased after a reduced start to the water year. These entitlement categories **will now receive full cumulative allocations this year totalling 100 per cent of their entitlement or share components**.

Furthermore, temporary water restrictions in the Lower Darling have been lifted to provide access to all water in accounts, including general security carryover. There is currently not enough water in storage to make a general security allocation, however; conditions will continue to be monitored and updated fortnightly. The improvements allow the drought criticality to be eased from Stage 4 to Stage 3 and is likely to ease further in coming weeks as inflows firm.

Releases commenced from the Menindee Lakes system on 26 March and are currently around 2,300 megalitres per day (ML/day). These releases will peak at around 3,000 ML/day to provide connectivity throughout the Lower Darling River to the Murray and achieve ecological outcomes, after which releases will recede to baseflow levels. Regulated operations will commence, with enough resource currently available to maintain operability for at least 12 months.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage	
Murray	97%	0%	18%		Stage 2
Lower Darling	100%	0%	19%		Stage 3

### Next announcement

The next mid-month comprehensive water allocation statement will be published on **Wednesday 15 April 2020**.

The next statement will include an updated indicative water availability outlook for next year (2020-21). It is still early for certainty about the 1 July allocation forecast, however; reliability of the outlook will generally improve as the forecast period reduces.

The availability outlook for next year aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions. Forecast conditions are best estimates only and not guaranteed water availability. They should be used with caution, particularly when projecting many months ahead.

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