



# Snowy Advisory Committee

## Meeting no.8

4th February 2020

## Communique

The Snowy Advisory Committee met via teleconference on 4 February 2020 to finalise the 2020-21 water release plan from the Snowy River at Jindabyne and the Snowy Montane Rivers.

The prolonged drought has starkly reduced the allocations available for the Snowy with less than 92 gegalitres (GL) for the 2020-21 water year. This compares with an average of 160 GL per year since 2011.

Committee members reflected on the deep impact this summer's bushfires have had on their rivers and communities. A large proportion of the Lower Snowy River, Upper Murrumbidgee and other Snowy Montane river catchments have been burnt. Run off from these burnt areas is likely to have a severe impact on water quality and in-stream habitat.

This year's water allocations are too low to effectively mitigate the impacts of ash and sediment-laden runoff in the lower Snowy. The Committee has endorsed a plan to use the 92 GL to provide a sequence of moderate flushes through the winter-spring period to mobilise fine sediment and keep it moving where possible. The plan follows natural variability and seasonality, referenced against flows in the unregulated Thredbo River.

Flows for the montane streams (the upper Snowy River, the Geehi River, the upper Murrumbidgee River and the Goodradigbee River) are set in proportion to the water available below Jindabyne Dam. Allocations for 2020-21 are so low that not all of these montane streams can be supported with environmental water for the whole year.

Tolbar Creek, which provides flows in the Snowy River below Island Bend, is to remain shut off for the entire year. The Committee assessed that continuing to provide flows through Diggers Creek would maintain some flow to this reach of the Snowy River.

Middle Creek, which provides flows to the Geehi River below Geehi Dam, is to have flows ceased during September and October 2020. The Committee considered that seasonal flows can be expected during this period that should lessen the effect of this adjustment.

Only 3 GL is available for releases to the Upper Murrumbidgee from Tantangara. Use of this water is planned to provide intermittent flows from mid-July to mid-October. A requirement for base passing flows to be maintained at Mittagang Crossing will likely provide some flow below Tantangara Dam outside of this period.