

3 February 2020

## NSW Murray and Lower Darling

### Water allocation update

There is no change to NSW Murray water availability, therefore general security allocations in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated river water sources **remain unchanged**.

On the back of an extremely dry December 2019 and catchment-wide heatwave conditions, rainfall in January failed to yield improvements to the NSW Murray resource. Soil moisture is severely depleted and is suppressing catchment runoff response from rainfall events. Soaking rainfall is required to improve runoff conditions and provide water for allocation.

Despite the continuing drought conditions, the system is being managed to maintain deliverability of all account water. As dry conditions continue to strain resources, small resource improvements are being set aside for 2020-21 priority needs, including full access to carryover.

Though good inflows prior to winter/spring are unlikely based on historical patterns, individual storms can bring heavy rainfall and good inflows at any time. Water users are encouraged to plan for the worst and hope for the best. In the meantime, conditions will continue to be closely monitored and water allocation statements updated, ensuring that any water that does become available is safely and promptly allocated in accordance with statutory water sharing plans.

The current bushfires have had no major impacts to River Murray infrastructure and operations. However, the fire affected landscape may result in changed runoff behaviour and impacts to water quality, the nature and extent of which is currently not known.

The Menindee Lakes system remains critical; below 1 per cent full, holding just 6,400 megalitres (ML). Rainfall in the northern basins in late January has resulted in some small flows in the tributaries and headwater reaches of the Barwon-Darling system. However, no meaningful flows are currently forecast to reach the Darling River and Menindee.

2019-20	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover	Drought Stage
Murray	97%	0%	18%	 Stage 2
Lower Darling	30%	0%	19% (not available)	 Stage 4

### Drought stage

The **NSW Murray** regulated river water source is in Stage 2 drought criticality. Drought operational planning has commenced so that contingency measures can be readied to protect critical water supplies if conditions deteriorate beyond this year. A Critical Water Advisory Panel has been formed for southern valleys to provide advice on drought management options and will convene as conditions necessitate.

The **Lower Darling** regulated river water source is at maximum Stage 4 drought criticality, and there are no foreseeable inflows. Restrictions limit water usage to critical needs.

The temporary water restrictions are likely to remain until the resource situation improves. Follow this link for further details on the reasons for the temporary restriction:

[www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions)

Further information on critical valleys in drought can be found at:

[www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought)

### Storage levels (as at 30 January 2020)\*

- Dartmouth Dam is 49 per cent full – falling – holding 1,895,000 ML.
- Hume Dam is 19 per cent full – falling – holding 570,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 48 per cent full – falling – holding 320,000 ML.

\* NSW share of this water is approximately 29%, 53% and 53% for these storages respectively, or 38% in total.

### State sharing of the Murray resource

The forecast end of January accounts indicate that 3,180 gigalitres (GL) of total shared Murray resource is available in the extreme dry (99<sup>th</sup> percentile) case, of which about 1,160 GL is needed to run the system. The NSW portion of this shared resource is 850 GL based on rules in the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. Following adjustments including trade, tributary inflows and usage to date, the assessment results in 980 GL of water being available for NSW to allocate which is unchanged from the last assessment.

### Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook for February to April shows no clear indication of drier or wetter than average conditions for a majority of the catchment. Temperatures are likely to be warmer than average.

The Bureau indicates that the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) remains neutral. Modelling suggests that the ENSO is likely to remain neutral through autumn. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) has returned to neutral from a very strong positive IOD event, and will remain neutral for the coming months.

For further details: [www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary)

### 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 address the physical constraint at the choke and protect existing downstream entitlement holders from an increased risk of delivery shortfall. Water users are encouraged to monitor the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) website ([www.mdba.gov.au](http://www.mdba.gov.au)) for information about the trade balance and status of trade across the Barmah choke.

The Menindee Lakes system is effectively empty. Temporary trade with the Murray is closed and typically remains closed until the system recovers to hold more than 640 GL of water and becomes part of the shared Murray system. Trade within the Lower Darling water source is allowed although there is no regulated water delivery.

Trade **out and into** the Murrumbidgee Valley is open (as of 31 January 2020). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website ([www.waternsw.com.au](http://www.waternsw.com.au)) for daily information about the IVT account balance and status of trade as there is only a small capacity for trade out of the valley. Trade **out** of the valley will close when the IVT balance increases to 100 GL.

### Next announcement

The next water allocation statement for the NSW Murray and Lower Darling valleys will be on **Monday 17 February 2020**.

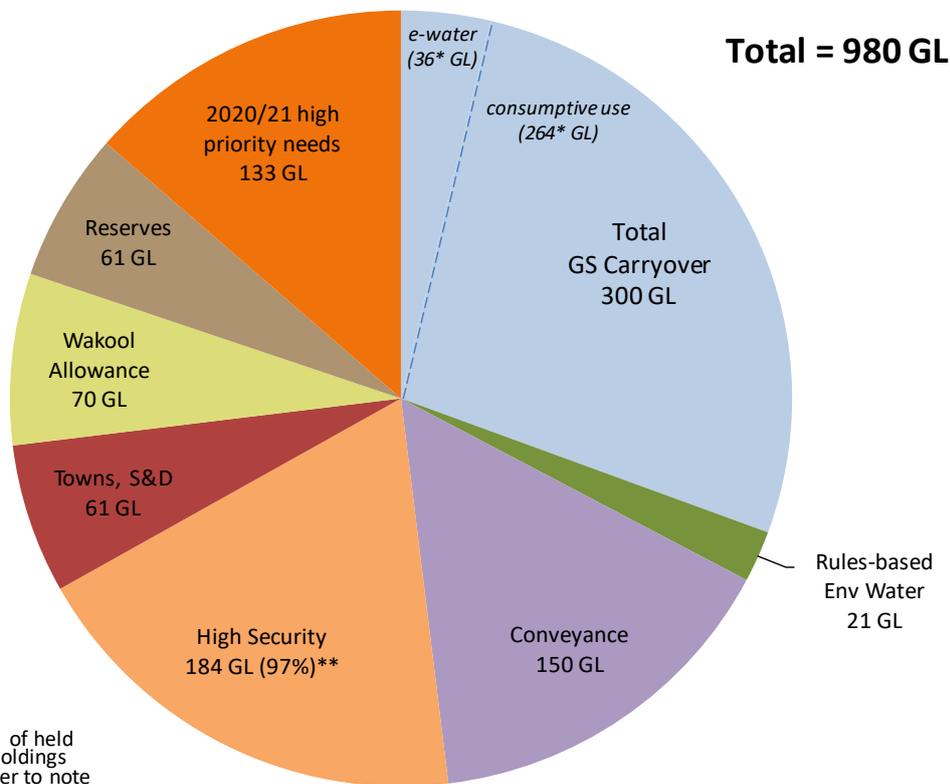
From mid-February, forecasts of indicative starting allocations for 1 July 2020 will be included in the mid-month water allocation statements. This aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions. Forecast conditions are best estimates only and not guaranteed water availability. They should be used with caution, particularly when projecting months ahead.

### NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution (3 February) for 2019-20	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource <sup>(1)</sup>	980
<b>less</b>	
Carryover <sup>(2), (8)</sup>	300
Rules based Environmental Water <sup>(3)</sup>	21
Towns, Stock, Domestic <sup>(4)</sup>	61 (100%)
Announced High Security subcategory <sup>(4)</sup>	<1 (100%)
Announced High Security <sup>(4)</sup>	184 (97%)
Conveyance <sup>(5)</sup>	150 (45%)
Wakool Allowance <sup>(6)</sup>	70
Reserves <sup>(7)</sup>	61
Announced General Security <sup>(8)</sup>	0 (0%)
2020-21 high priority needs <sup>(9)</sup>	133

\*See notes below.

## NSW Murray resource distribution 2019-20 – 3 February 2020



\* indicative breakdown of held environmental water holdings (OEH, TLM, CEWH), refer to note  
 \*\* includes <1GL (100%) for HS subcategory

### 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 M1 releases to date for this water year (2019-20) is estimated to be about 450GL. NSW is 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 forecasts indicate that NSW is 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 (PEW) – water required to be set aside to provide for riverine environments, as per water sharing plan and other inter-jurisdictional agreements. In the NSW Murray this includes the Murray Additional Allowance (MAA) (about 6GL) and the Barmah-Millewa Allowance (B-MA) (about 289GL – currently 100% borrowed). It also includes River Murray Increased Flows (RMIF) in Hume, accrued as part of the Snowy Water Initiative (currently about 15GL). 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, 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 licences 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". Drought critical

conveyance water allocated to small irrigation districts for running channels to supply high priority entitlements has been included in this category.

- (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) Wakool Allowance – a conveyance volume necessary for NSW to operate the Edward-Wakool system. Typically up to 70 GL.
- (7) 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.
- (8) 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, 23GL of conveyance allocation and 36GL 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.
- (9) 2020-2021 high priority needs on 1 July 2020 - volume set aside to cover high priority needs on 1 July 2020, for 'Year 2', including potential carryover

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