

1 September 2016

NSW Murray and Lower Darling

Water allocation update

Allocations

NSW Murray general security allocation has **increased by 5 per cent to 30 per cent** of entitlement with a commensurate increase in allocation to conveyance entitlements. Rainfall since June has improved soil moisture and provided steady system inflows and storage improvements.

In addition, in accordance with the water sharing plan, 71 GL of the Barmah-Millewa EWA borrow has been repaid. A further 175 GL remains to be paid (equivalent to about 8 per cent of general security improvement) after which further available water can again accrue to general security entitlement holders.

Average general security carryover in NSW Murray water user accounts is 27 per cent of entitlement, meaning that overall general security water availability is now 57 per cent.

Pre-release operations commenced this week at Hume Dam ahead of forecast heavy rainfall, meaning that Hume Dam is effectively full.

NSW Murray general security allocations are not full because no Menindee resources are available to the Murray, and Dartmouth Dam is only 57 per cent full with about 1,450 GL of airspace.

Supplementary access continues to be available in the NSW Murray. Water users should confirm with WaterNSW the times and reaches where access applies. In addition, general security licence holders can divert supplementary water 'without debit', bearing in mind that diversions will count toward annual usage limits. For further information refer to WaterNSW's website at <http://www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/news/supplementary>.

The Lower Darling regulated water source is also improving as the Darling River brings inflows to the Menindee Lakes system. Lake Wetherell is full and Lake Pamamaroo is being readied to receive water. A return to average or above average inflows this summer (northern wet season) could see water in Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla after being dry for some years.

There is already sufficient water available to maintain continuous flows to the Lower Darling for 2017, keep Broken Hill supplied with surface water until around mid-2018, and lift the temporary water restrictions in the Lower Darling.

As recovery steadily returns to the Lower Darling, drought contingency measures are being lifted including removal of block banks, unsealing weir gates and redeploying pumping equipment.

There is also sufficient water available for **full allocation to high priority entitlements in the Lower Darling** including:

- Local water utility – up 30 per cent to 100 per cent of entitlement
- Domestic and stock – up 50 per cent to 100 per cent of entitlement
- High security – up 60 per cent to 100 per cent of entitlement

At this time there is **no allocation for Lower Darling general security entitlements**; however, with the lifting of water restrictions, carryover water or purchased water in accounts can be used for irrigation. The Menindee Lakes system is currently about 12 per cent capacity. Available resources will continue to be assessed regularly and further timely allocations made as appropriate.

Media contact: James Muddle – 0407 103 507

www.water.nsw.gov.au

	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murray	97%	30%	27%
Lower Darling	100%	0%	34%

Upper Murray storage levels (as at 30 August 2016)

- Dartmouth Dam is currently about 57 per cent full – rising - holding 2,200,000 megalitres (ML).
- Hume Dam is 90 per cent full - holding 2,720,000 ML.

It should be noted that these storages are operated to equalise the risk of spill and thereby maximise resource availability. However, depending on where inflows originate, storages can become out of balance, as is currently the case. With Hume Dam effectively full, allocation increase will mostly come from future improvement in Dartmouth (currently half full) or Menindee Lakes.

Climate outlook

Significant rainfall fell in the Murray and Murrumbidgee headwater catchments in July and August and catchments remain wet.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) seasonal outlook continues to indicate that spring (September to November 2016) rainfall is likely to be above average across parts of northern Australia. For most parts of the Murray and Murrumbidgee catchments the chances of a wetter or drier three months are roughly equal. September is likely to be wetter in localised areas of southern NSW.

The current outlook reflects a weakening negative Indian Ocean Dipole and tropical Pacific Ocean temperatures, potentially approaching La Niña thresholds.

Trade

In the Murray, trade across the Barmah choke remains restricted to 'no net trade downstream'. Downstream trade opens automatically to the extent of the volume of any upstream trade. The trade restriction is in place to prevent water trades from placing excessive physical water delivery demand on choke channel capacity during the year, which could affect the water security of existing entitlement holders. Water users are encouraged to monitor the MDBA website at <http://www.mdba.gov.au/managing-water/water-markets-trade/interstate-water-trade/barmah-choke-trade-balance> for information about the trade balance and status of trade.

Trade is permitted within the Lower Darling water source, but inter-valley trade remains closed.

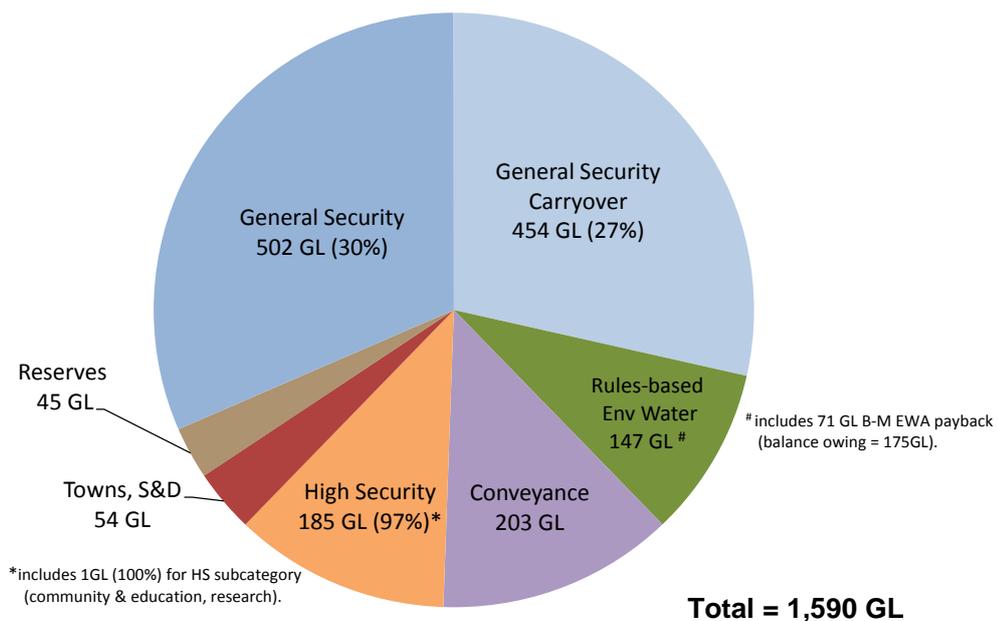
Trade **into** (and within) the Murrumbidgee Valley is open, but trade **out** of the Murrumbidgee Valley is closed. Water users are encouraged to monitor the WaterNSW website at www.watarnsw.com.au/customer-service/trading/murrumbidgee for information about the Murrumbidgee IVT account balance and the current status of Murrumbidgee trade.

NSW Murray Resource Assessment Data Sheet

Resource Distribution (as at 1 September) for 2016-17	
	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	1,590
less	
Carryover	454
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽²⁾	147
Towns, Stock, Domestic ⁽³⁾	54 (100%)
Announced High Security subcategory (community & education, research) ⁽³⁾	1 (100%)
Announced High Security ⁽³⁾	184 (97%)
Conveyance ⁽⁴⁾	203
Reserves ⁽⁵⁾	45
Announced General Security	502 (30%)

**See notes below.*

**Resource Distribution 2016-17
NSW Murray - 1 September 2016**



Notes:

- (1) NSW is currently in Special Accounting with South Australia but this has no material impact on NSW allocations. Special accounting is triggered when NSW forecast is unable to meet the required reserve of 1,250 GL by the end of the year to supply South Australia (SA) with its entitlement in the following water year. Details can be found in the MDB Agreement Clauses 123-129.
- (2) Rules-based environmental water – water required to be set aside under water sharing plans to provide for riverine environments. In the NSW Murray this includes Additional Environmental Allowance (AEA) (6 GL). The Barmah-Millewa Allowance (B-MA) is ‘rules-based’ water which can be fully borrowed by consumptive users when general security allocations are less than 30 percent. The account balance is 246 GL. When the announced general security allocations reached 30 per cent of entitlement, 71GL of additional available water was used to begin repaying the Borrow. When the remaining 175 GL is repaid, general security allocations can increase beyond 30 percent, in accordance with the water sharing plan. Wakool system requirements (70 GL) are included but licence-based environmental water is excluded.
- (3) The *Water Sharing Plan for the New South Wales Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016* has subcategories of high security licenses 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. These licences are to receive 100% allocation at the commencement of each water year. 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”.
- (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 plan and is a function of current high and general security allocation.
- (5) Reserves – required primarily under statutory plans; used for emergency purposes and critical needs.

Lower Darling – summary and update

- To date, about 180,000 megalitres (ML) has arrived at Lake Wetherell and another 100,000 to 130,000 ML is flowing upstream in the Barwon-Darling system.
- Lake Wetherell has now reached full supply level and Lake Pamamaroo is being readied to receive water. If average or better than average inflow conditions are received this year, it is likely that lakes Menindee and Cawndilla will also receive water.
- The block banks in the Lower Darling have been removed and the Copi Hollow bank will soon be removed. Sealant has been removed from weir gates and pumping equipment redeployed.
- Full allocation has been announced for town, domestic and stock, and high security entitlements.
- Temporary water restrictions in the Lower Darling have been lifted.
- The Menindee Lakes system is about 12 per cent capacity which is insufficient for general security allocation. Until there is further system improvement, general security water users can use carryover or transferred account water for irrigation.
- Over 20,000 ML of water has been released to the Lower Darling and continuous flows are now probable for more than 12 months.
- DPI Water is continuing its program of monitoring flow rates and water quality. Water users are being kept informed of water quality test results as they come to hand.
- Water quality has improved substantially at Menindee and in the Lower Darling; however, the focus is now on a plume of salty water making its way through the Wentworth weir pool. Profiling of the pool is being undertaken to measure the location and movement of the salt.
- An information meeting was convened by WaterNSW at Pooncarie recently and customers and landowners were advised of river operations and outlooks. Water orders should be submitted to WaterNSW prior to extraction of water.
- The increased inflows allow the deferral of construction of short-term bore fields, extension to Broken Hill surface water supplies and assured continuation of releases to the Lower Darling.
- Work on the pipeline from the Murray to drought-proof Broken Hill is continuing and is expected to be completed by late 2018.
- The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting an equal chance of drier or wetter conditions this spring (September to November 2016) and a likely early onset for the northern (summer) wet season.
- This information will be updated in the next water allocation statement on 15 September 2016.

Next announcements

The next resource assessment and allocation update for the NSW Murray and Lower Darling valleys will be on **Thursday 15 September 2016**. This mid-month statement will contain additional detailed information including an update of the rocket diagram.