

Report card for the Hillas Water Source

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Water source context

Water Sharing Plan:	Murrumbidgee Unregulated River Water Sources 2025
Extraction management Unit:	Unregulated Murrumbidgee Below Burrinjuck Dam to Gogeldrie
Area:	678 km ²
Inflowing water source:	Nil
Receiving water source:	Murrumbidgee Regulated River

River flows

Flow records:	86 years at Hillas Creek at Mt Adrah gauge (410043)
Stream type:	Perennial

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate:	152 ML/year
Native title rights estimate:	Nil at commencement of Plan

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement:	1,543 ML/year	(23 licences)
— Unregulated River:	1,513 ML/year	(18 licences)
— Domestic and Stock:	30 ML/year	(5 licences)

Table 1. Access rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Cease to take (A Class)	Take is not permitted when flow is less than or equal to 8 ML/day at the flow reference point OR When there is no visible flow at the pump site	No change
Cease to take (B Class)	Take is not permitted when flow is less than or equal to 87 ML/day at the flow reference point OR When there is no visible flow at the pump site	No change
Take from in-river pools	Take is not permitted when flow is less than or equal to 8 ML/day at the flow reference point	Take is not permitted when flow is less than or equal to 8 ML/day at the flow reference point OR when the in-river pool is below full capacity
Flow reference point	Hillas Creek at Mount Adrah gauge (410043)	No change
Take from in-river dam pools	Take is not permitted unless it is consistent with the water supply work approval	No change
Take from off-river pools	Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below 80% of full capacity	From years 1 – 5 take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below 80% of full capacity. From year 6 of the Plan, take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below full capacity. NOTE: existing licence holders may apply for an exemption from the new rule and retain the current rule. See the “Key Factors for Decisions” section.

Take from off-river dam pools	Take is not permitted when the off-river dam pool is below its natural capacity	No change
Exemptions	Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for: • health and hygiene • domestic use • take from a run-off harvesting dam Specific licences are listed in Schedule 2 of the Plan.	No change

Table 2. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Permitted	No change
Protection for wetlands	N/A	No new or amended works permitted within, or within 3 km upstream of, a Ramsar wetland. No new or amended works permitted within wetlands indicated on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan, unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned. This rule does not apply to replacement works.

Table 3. Water trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Conversion from unregulated river to unregulated river (high flow) licence	Permitted, subject to assessment	No change

INTO water source	Trade permitted into high flows, provided the total shares in the water source do not exceed 3,100 units	No change
WITHIN water source	Permitted, subject to assessment, but not into off-river pools	No change
Interstate trade	Not permitted, unless administrative arrangements have been agreed to and implemented by NSW and the other State or Territory and unless the 'INTO water source' rule (see earlier in this table) is met.	Removed from the Plan; however, there is no change to intent because the interstate trade rule requiring administrative arrangements to be in place is covered under sections 71U and 71V of the <i>Water Management Act 2000</i> .
Protection for wetlands	N/A	Not permitted into, or within 3 km upstream of, a Ramsar wetland. Not permitted into wetlands identified in the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan. Trade between licences within the same WSP prescribed wetland is permitted.

Trading covers:

- conversion of access licence to a new category (for example, from unregulated river to unregulated river (high flow) access licence)
- assignment of rights dealings (trading of a licence)
- share component dealings between water sources (trading of entitlement between water sources)
- water allocation dealings (trading an annual allocation)
- water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).

Key factors for decisions

- The risk assessment indicates that the water source has medium in-stream value and identified possible risk from extraction as low for zero flow periods and medium for base-flow and low flows. Based on this information, access rules were considered appropriate for the water source.

Off-river pools

- The 2012 plan allows water in natural off-river pools (e.g. lagoons) to be extracted down to 80% of full capacity. From Year 6 of the draft plan, the proposed rule is to prohibit extraction of water unless an off-river pool is at or above 100% of full capacity.
- Existing licensees on off-river pools may apply for an exemption to the new rule. Applications to retain current access conditions must be received by Year 5 of the Plan and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In-river pools

- Access rules for in-river pools that prohibit the drawdown of the pool if it is below full capacity are proposed for the water source. This is to maintain connectivity of in-river pools for ecosystem health and basic landholder rights access.
- Access from in-river pools is also subject to any rules that require flow at a flow reference point. This is not a change from the current water sharing plan rules.

Trading

- Only unregulated river (high flow) entitlement can be traded into the water source and unregulated river licences can be converted to unregulated river (high flow) licences within this water source. The maximum volume of entitlement that can be taken from high flows is 3,100-unit shares. There have been no conversions or trades into unregulated river (high flow) access licence in this water source since the start of the 2012 plan.
- Limited trade in of non-high flow entitlement would not pose an unacceptable risk to the water source. A conservative increase of 15% of current entitlement has been applied in suitable other water sources.
- Trades into the water source may benefit access licence holders by increasing opportunity and flexibility and may potentially reduce hydrologic stress in other water sources.

Improving the protection of wetlands

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has recommended the draft plan provide better protection for important wetlands. The department has developed criteria to identify specific wetlands in the Plan area. It is proposed to include rules to improve their protection by prohibiting new water supply works and restricting trades into or upstream of these areas. The prohibition on new works will not apply to replacement works.
- Wetlands identified for improved protection were drawn from multiple datasets including the Murrumbidgee Long-Term Water Plan, relevant Floodplain Management Plan, Ramsar listing,

Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia, Endangered Ecological Communities and any existing wetlands identified in the current water sharing plan.

- A map of the WSP prescribed wetlands identified for this Plan is available on the Department's website.
- More information on improving the protection of wetlands is available in a fact sheet.

Other key rules – no change proposed

Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account that acts like a bank account where water is credited or debited.

- Water is credited to an account by an available water determination or if water is traded in (purchased) during the year from other licence holders.
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted from a water source or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, diversion channel, etc.) will be measured through metering or logbooks.

Carryover and individual account limits

For unregulated river and unregulated river (high flow) access licence accounts, carryover of water remaining in an account at the end of each water year is permitted up to 1 ML per unit share or 100% of the share component (where expressed in ML). Water remaining in the water allocation account of a domestic and stock licence must not be carried over from one water year to the next water year.

For unregulated river and unregulated river (high flow) access licences, the maximum water account debit in any 3 consecutive water years is:

- the volume of water allocated to the account over those 3 years from available water determinations, plus
- any adjustments made for allocation assignments (trades) or water allocation re-credited into the account.

For domestic and stock access licences, the maximum water account debit in any 1 water year is:

- the volume of water allocated to the account in that year from available water determinations, plus
- any adjustments made for allocation assignments (trades) or water allocation re-credited into the account.

Rules for granting access licences

There are limited purposes for which a new licence will be granted. We anticipate that users who need more water will source it from the market. One reason a licence may be granted is for Aboriginal cultural purposes. Aboriginal Cultural Access Licences are permitted to be granted up to a maximum volume of 10 ML/year per licence, subject to assessment.

Other reasons are identified in Section 10 of the *Water Management (General) Regulation 2018*.

Public exhibition

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

In particular, we seek your feedback on:

- Greater protection for WSP prescribed and Ramsar wetlands
- Change in access rule for off-river pools
- Change in access for in-river pools.

A submission form is available on the department's website.

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Murrumbidgee Unregulated River Water Sources 2025* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).