

15 May 2023

Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source

Water allocation update

This Water Allocation Statement affirms no changes to current full allocations this water year and provides the final outlook for potential opening 2023/24 allocations on 1 July 2023.

While disclosed herein are potential increases in general security allocation under various inflows conditions to 1 September and 1 November 2023, water users are reminded that these forecasts are indicative only and not guaranteed allocations, and therefore should be used with caution.

In the Murray system, suppressed demand and rainfall in upper catchments has again increased the spill risk from Hume Dam and unregulated flow conditions have resumed for a majority of the valley. Under the water sharing plan rules, late season interstate trade is closed between 1 May and 30 June, regardless of the risk of spill in Hume. However, due to the new elevated spill risk at Hume, NSW is monitoring a potential need to extend the interstate trade restriction beyond 1 July into the new water-year to protect NSW water users. Further information is provided below under the trade section and a timely public announcement will be made if necessary.

Due to drier conditions compared to last year, the resources available in the Murrumbidgee valley are slightly lower than the same time last year, which may produce a marginally lower opening general security allocation this year (1 July) than that for last year.

The opening allocations for the Murrumbidgee valley for 2023/24 will be incorporated in a Water Allocation Statement covering all regulated valleys on 1 July 2023

Year to date allocations for 2022/23 (current water year)

2022/23	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murrumbidgee	100%	100% [#]	28% [*]

[#] Water availability on individual licences is subject to account limits as per the rules in the water sharing plan.

^{*} Carryover in private accounts can be considered forfeited and replaced by allocation when full allocations are announced.

Storage levels (as of 15 May 2023)

- Blowering Dam is 90% full – stable – holding about 1,475,000 megalitres (ML).
- Burrinjuck Dam is 85% full – rising – holding about 870,000 ML.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for June to August shows that rainfall is very likely to be below median. Daytime and overnight temperatures are expected to be hotter than median.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook indicator is on El Niño Watch, meaning there is around a 50% chance than El Niño conditions could form in 2023. Should El Niño conditions develop, rainfall will likely be drier than median conditions.

Further details at: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary

Trade

Trade **out of the Murrumbidgee is closed** and trade **into the Murrumbidgee is open** (as of 15 May 2023). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website (www.waternsw.com.au) for daily information about the IVT account balance, the status of trade, and other information including seasonal trade closures. The Murrumbidgee IVT account balance is operated within a range of 0 GL and 100 GL. The Murrumbidgee IVT balance can rapidly fluctuate, and information presented in this statement is current at the time of its writing.

Interstate Trade

A temporary restriction on interstate water trades (clause 71V of the Water Management Act 2000) into the NSW Murray, Lower Darling and Murrumbidgee regulated river water sources from other states was announced on 5 August 2022. This temporary restriction lapsed on 31 March 2023 as the spill risk from Hume subsided. However, currently, from 1 May to 30 June 2023, interstate trade is restricted in accordance with the water sharing plan, irrespective of the risk of spill in Hume.

Interstate trades are typically accompanied by a reassignment of physical water (resource) in storages from the selling state to the buying state. When storages are full or near full, there is limited capacity to hold reassigned resource and a high risk that any resource which is reassigned will spill. Therefore, interstate trades into NSW cannot be safely underpinned by resource. Should NSW accept incoming interstate trades, it is likely to adversely impact existing NSW Murray allocations and water users. Therefore, in such circumstances, NSW will place a temporary restriction on interstate trades to protect NSW water users.

With a high risk of spill returning to Hume, a 71V (interstate) trade restriction may be necessary from 1 July 2023, to again protect NSW water users. Conditions are being closely monitored and a timely public announcement will be made in June if necessary.

More information on temporary water restrictions can be found at:
www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement will be published on 1 July 2023. This statement will cover all regulated valleys in NSW and communicate the commencing allocation for all regulated entitlements in the state, including the Murrumbidgee regulated valley.

Following the 1 July 2023 water allocation statement, regular fortnightly statements will commence on 17 July 2023. Fortnightly statements are typically published on the 1st of 15th day of the month, or the next business day.

Note: Murrumbidgee statements are available from around 2:30pm on the day of the publication.

Outlook for 2023-24

A water availability outlook for the start of the next water year (1 July 2023) is provided below. The outlook is indicative only, not guaranteed, and should be used with caution. Nevertheless, it aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions.

Key information

- This outlook for 1 July 2023 water availability is conservatively based on a recession of current flows to extreme dry (99th percentile) conditions to the end of 2023-24. The resulting indicative forecast general security allocations for September and November 2023 under a range of possible inflow scenarios are provided in the table below to assist water users to plan ahead.
- The forecast information is not guaranteed and should be used at one's own risk.
- Due to wet conditions and low usage this water year, the maximum permissible carryover volume has been estimated for the 2023-24 water year. That is, it is assumed general security and Conveyance carryover will be around 30% of entitlement, some 680,000 ML.
- There is some forfeit of 2022/23 account water assumed on 30 June 2023, which is boosting opening general security allocations on 1 July 2023. Should usage be higher than expected, and account forfeits lower than assumed, the opening allocation will be revised down.
- The undelivered IVT balance at the end of this water year (2022/23) will be carried over unchanged to the next water year (2023/24). The IVT balance is held in Murrumbidgee storages and is a callable resource available to the NSW Murray.
- If wet conditions persist, a situation similar to this water year may arise where, due to full storages and low demand, allocations stall as there is no space available to capture new resource. Only when liabilities reduce, through water usage, and that airspace is refilled, can allocations increase.
- Once the commencing allocations are announced on 1 July 2023, regular assessments will be undertaken and allocation announcements made fortnightly on the 1st and 15th of each month, or the following working day, as usual, until full allocations are achieved.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2023 for 2023/24

- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for **towns, domestic** and **stock** access licences, and **sub-category high security** entitlements.
- Full allocations for **supplementary (including Lowbidgee)** access licence holders can be expected and respective take will be available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.
- Forecasts show likely 95% allocation for **high security** entitlements.
- **Carryover** is expected to be near maximum, some 680,000 ML, and fully deliverable in 2023/24.
- **Conveyance** will be allocated in accordance with water sharing plan rules, commensurate with high security and general security allocations.
- Preliminary forecasts indicate sufficient resource to provide a likely **general security** allocation of at least 30% of entitlement.
- Water will be set aside for environmental requirements in accordance with the rules of the Murrumbidgee regulated rivers water sharing plan.

Chances of improvement

The chances of improved Murrumbidgee general security allocations after 1 July 2023, based on a repeat of historical inflows, are provided in the table below under a variety of conditions. The forecast is based on all available historical data, which gives a better outlook than using just the driest years on record (dry tercile).

It is important to note that these estimates are indicative improvements only and are not guaranteed allocations. Estimates are likely to change based on weather conditions, water user behaviour, water management decisions and other events. This means water users should use this information with caution and at their own risk, particularly as it projects many months ahead.

Forecast general security allocations (%)

(Any carryover water can be added to these indicative allocations)

Repeat of historical inflow conditions	1 Sept 2023	1 Nov 2023
99 chances in 100 (extreme dry) (99%)	30%	30%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	35%	40%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	43%	48%*
1 chance in 2 (median) (50%)	50%*	60%*
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%)	52%*	100% ^{**}

Note 1: Estimated values indicative only, not guaranteed and subject to change based on actual events unfolding.

Note 2: Forecast assumes 30% carryover on average.

* Model indicates potential storage spills, limited capacity for resource improvement and constrained delivery from Blowering. High uncertainty exists and further allocation improvements in median and wet scenarios may be driven by water usage rather than inflows. Should demand not set in early in the 2023/24 water year, general security allocation improvements over the 75% inflow case will be very limited, and potentially lower than those shown in the table above.

^{**}Allocation announcement driven by sufficient resource to cover around a 70% allocation to general security, with the remainder covered by account forfeits due to general security licences hitting account limits, taking total general security allocation to 100%. Should reduced demand and storage spills prevent additional resource from being captured, allocations will be much lower than 100%.

Water allocation guide

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water has produced a series of guides to describe the water allocation methods for most NSW regulated river systems. The guide for the Murrumbidgee regulated system is available at: www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process

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