

15 March 2023

# NSW Murray and Lower Darling

## Water allocation update

The NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated valleys are fully allocated for the current water year (2022/23). No further allocation increments are permitted in this water year in accordance with the rules of the water sharing plan.

This water allocation statement affirms the current water year allocations and provides an outlook for potential opening 2023/24 allocations on 1 July 2023, including likely increases in general security allocation under various inflows conditions to 1 September and 1 November 2023.

An update to the 2023/24 outlook will be provided in mid-April and mid-May 2023. As we step closer to the 2023/24 water year, the reliability in the forecast will improve. Nonetheless, water users are reminded that these forecasts are indicative only and not guaranteed allocations, and therefore should be used with caution.

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

2022/23	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murray	100%	110% <sup>#</sup>	46% <sup>*</sup>
Lower Darling	100%	100% <sup>#</sup>	7% <sup>*</sup>

<sup>#</sup> Availability of allocation on individual licences is subject to account limits as per the rules in the water sharing plan.

<sup>\*</sup> Carryover in private accounts can be considered forfeited and replaced by allocation when full allocations are announced.

### Murray storage levels (as at 15 March 2023)\*

- Dartmouth Dam is 97% full – stable – holding 3,730,000 megalitres (ML).
- Hume Dam is 92% full – falling – holding 2,765,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 62% full – falling – holding 420,000 ML.
- Menindee Lakes System is 95% full – falling – holding 1,640,000 ML.

\* The NSW Murray share of this water is approximately 47%, 49%, 35% and 37% for these storages respectively, or 45% in total (averaged across all storages).

### Climatic outlook

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

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook indicator has shifted to 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](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. Water users are advised 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.

Temporary trade between the Lower Darling and the Murray is open and will likely remain open until the Menindee Lakes system next falls below 480 gigalitres (GL). Trade within the Lower Darling regulated river water source remains open.

Trade **out of** and trade **into** the Murrumbidgee is **open** (as of 14 March 2023). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website ([www.watarnsw.com.au](http://www.watarnsw.com.au)) for daily information about the IVT account balance, the status of trade, and other information. The Murrumbidgee IVT account is operated between its normal 0 GL and 100 GL range. The Murrumbidgee IVT balance can rapidly fluctuate, and information presented in this statement is current at the time of its writing.

## Interstate 71V restriction

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.

Interstate trades are typically accompanied by a reassignment of physical water (resource) in storages from the selling state to the buying state. Due to full storages, 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, NSW placed a temporary restriction on interstate trades to protect NSW water users.

**The temporary restriction will remain in force until the end of March 2023.** With dry conditions forecast and airspace in storages slowly increasing, there is no plan to extend the trade restriction beyond March 2023. However, should inflows into storages elevate sufficiently and pose a spill risk of traded water, NSW will consider applying further trade restrictions to protect existing entitlement holders.

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

## Next announcement

The next monthly statement to update the 1 July 2023 opening allocation outlook will be published on Monday 17 April 2023.

**Note: NSW Murray statements are now available online from about 2:30pm on publication day.**

## 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, particularly when projecting many months ahead. 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 assumed dry (75th percentile) inflows for the remainder of this water year and extreme dry (99th percentile) conditions for 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 is assumed for the 2023-24 water year. That is, it is assumed NSW Murray general security carryover will be around 50% of entitlement, some 838,000 ML.
- 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 and storages are full, allocation improvements may be limited due to limited available airspace to the ability to capture new resource. Only when liabilities reduce, and new resource is captured, can allocations increase.
- As usual, the Barmah Choke trade balance will be re-set on 1 July and will reflect the volume of annual Snowy Savings below the choke that will not need to be delivered downstream.
- Once the commencing allocations are announced on 1 July 2023, regular assessments will be undertaken and allocation announcements made fortnightly on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, or the following working day, as usual, until full allocations are achieved.

### Indicative allocations on 1 July 2023 for 2023/24 – Lower Darling

---

- The Menindee Lakes System is around 95% full, holding some 1,640,000 megalitres (ML).
- The Menindee resource is currently shared with other states, under the Murray Darling Basin Agreement, as the system is holding more than 640,000 ML.
- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for all entitlements; **towns, domestic** and **stock** access licences, **high security** and **general security** entitlements in 2023/24.
- Full allocations for **supplementary** access licences can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.
- Given high storage volumes, **carryover** in accounts will be replaced by full allocations on 1 July as maximum account limits take effect.

### Indicative allocations on 1 July 2023 for 2023/24 – NSW Murray

---

- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for **towns, domestic** and **stock** access licences, and **sub-category high security** entitlements.
- Full allocations for **supplementary** access licence holders can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.

- There is likely to be a commencing **general security** allocation of 30% of entitlement. This forecast will improve in subsequent outlooks.
- Allocation to **high security** (excluding sub-categories) will likely be 97% of entitlement.
- Full general security **carryover** (50% of share component), some 838,000 ML, is deliverable.
- **Conveyance** is expected to be allocated in accordance with water sharing plan rules, commensurate with high security and general security allocations.
- The current Barmah-Millewa Environmental Water Allowance (BMEWA) account balance is approximately 200,000 ML. In accordance with the water sharing plan, the balance will be fully borrowed on 1 July 2023, with payback commencing once general security allocations reach 30%.
- With the forecasts indicating a likely commencing allocation of 30% to general security, the BMEWA payback will likely commence on 1 July 2023, and 150,000 ML is forecast to be available. Once the BMEWA is paid back, general security allocations can increment beyond 30% subject to resource improvements.
- Water can be expected to be set aside for environmental requirements in accordance with the rules of the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated rivers water sharing plan.

## Chances of improvement

The chances of improved NSW Murray 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 more realistic outlook in the current conditions 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 improve 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 Sep 2023	1 Nov 2023
99 chances in 100 (extreme) (99%)	30%	30%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	35%	50%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	40%	110%
1 chance in 2 (mean) (50%)	48%*	110%
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%)	55%*	110%

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

Note 2: Statistical values reflect NSW share of inflows, not whole of system inflows.

Note 3: Forecast assumes 50% general security carryover.

Note 4: Forecast incorporates Murrumbidgee regulated end of system flows.

Note 5: Assumes BMA payback commences once general security allocations reach 30% as per the water sharing plan.

\* Potential storage spills resulting in limited allocation improvement.

## 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

NSW Murray regulated system is available at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process)

Subscribe [here](#) to receive the Department of Planning and Environment's monthly email update on water planning, management and reform in New South Wales.

You can also follow the department on Twitter: @NSWDPIE\_Water

Feedback on this work or any aspect of the department's service can be provided using the widget at: [www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact](http://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact)