

15 March 2023

# Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source

## Water allocation update

The Murrumbidgee regulated valley is fully allocated for the current water year (2022/23). No further allocation increments are permitted 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.

Since the valley reached full allocations in January 2023 for the current water year, resources have continued to accrue. However, a combination of factors limited the capture of additional resource.

Wet conditions generating high inflows kept storages full and spilling until January 2023. These wet conditions also suppressed downstream regulated demand. As a result, with full storages and low demand, very limited additional new resource was captured.

As drier weather conditions have been experienced since January, demand has ramped up and storages have slowly started to gain airspace. However, as the climate has become drier, inflows into these storages have also reduced near baseflow levels, meaning that while the airspace exists to capture new resource, due to a softening of rainfall, significant additional runoff is not being generated to backfill this airspace.

Further rainfall and runoff, above assumed minimums, will aid in increasing resource and therefore the opening allocation outlook on 1 July 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
Murrumbidgee	100%	100% <sup>#</sup>	28% <sup>*</sup>

<sup>#</sup> Water availability 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.

## Storage levels (as of 15 March 2023)

- Blowering Dam is about 79% full – falling – holding about 1,300,000 megalitres (ML).
- Burrinjuck Dam is about 77% full – falling – holding about 790,000 ML.

## 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

Trade **out of** and trade **into** the Murrumbidgee is **open** (as of 14 March 2023). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website ([www.waternsw.com.au](http://www.waternsw.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 gigalitres (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, a temporary restriction on interstate trades into NSW has been put in place 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: Murrumbidgee statements are now 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, 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 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.
- 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, 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 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

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- 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.
- Full **carryover** is expected to be deliverable, some 680,000 ML, on 1 July.
- **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 5% of entitlement. This forecast will be improved in subsequent outlooks.
- Water will be set aside for environmental requirements in accordance with the rules of the Murrumbidgee regulated rivers water sharing plan.

### Chances of improvement

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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%)	5%	5%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	12%	21%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	19%	34%
1 chance in 2 (median) (50%)	34%*	64%*
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%)	50%*	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 significant 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.

## 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](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process)

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