

Report card for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated Water Source

Report card 1 of 1

Water source context

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|---|---|
| Water sharing plan: | Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated River Water Source |
| Area: | 100,053 km ² |
| Inflowing water source: | None, except overbank flows from the unregulated Barwon-Darling and regulated Lower Darling and NSW Murray rivers, and Lachlan River, during floods |
| Receiving water sources: | Regulated NSW Murray and Lower Darling water sources |
| Approximate average annual rainfall: | 200 to 300 mm (285 mm at Wentworth) |

River flows

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|----------------------|--|
| Flow records: | 1954 to present (67 years) at Great Darling Anabranch at Bulpunga gauge (425011) |
| Stream type: | Ephemeral, losing |

Basic landholder rights

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|--|-------------|
| Domestic and stock rights estimate: | 460 ML/year |
| Native title rights: | 0 ML/year |

Licensed water entitlements

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|---|---|
| Total surface water entitlement: | 42.5 ML/year (7 licences) for Domestic and Stock access licences. 3387 ML/year (12 licences) for Unregulated River access licences |
| Local water utilities entitlement: | 6300 ML/year (1 licence) |

Rules

Table 1. Access rules

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|--|---|----------------|
| Cease-to-pump | Take is not permitted when there is no visible flow at the pump site. | No change |
| Take from in-river pools | Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is below full containment volume. | 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 full containment volume. | No change |
| Take from identified* off-river pools (lagoons) | Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is below 50% full containment volume. Take is not permitted from Thegoa Lagoon if this lagoon is greater than 50% full due only to diversions of environmental water from the regulated NSW Murray. | No change |
| Exemptions | Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source, including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and hygiene • Domestic use • Take from a run-off harvesting dam • Specific licences are listed in Schedule 2 of the Plan. | No change |

* The identified lagoons of this Plan are Thegoa Lagoon, Neilpo Lagoon, Boeill Lagoon and Peacock Creek.

Table 2. Rules for constructing surface water supply works

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|---|---|---|
| In-river dams | Permitted | No change |
| Identified lagoons* and Great Darling Anabranh | Not permitted, except if a replacement water supply work | No change |
| Protection for wetlands | n/a, except for identified lagoons* and Great Darling Anabranh (see above). | No new or amended works permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland. |

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|------|---------------|---|
| | | No new or amended works permitted within significant wetlands listed in Schedule 4 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. |

* The identified lagoons of this Plan are Thegoa Lagoon, Neilpo Lagoon, Boeill Lagoon and Peacock Creek.

Table 1. Trading (dealing) rules

| Type | Current rules | Proposed rules |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Into water source | Not permitted | No change |
| Within water source | Permitted, subject to assessment Not permitted into or between an identified lagoon* Not permitted into Great Darling Anabranh, except if for an environmental purpose. | No change |
| Interstate trade | Not permitted | No change |
| Protection for wetlands | n/a, except for identified lagoons* and Great Darling Anabranh (see above). | Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland. Not permitted into significant wetlands listed in Schedule 4 of the draft Plan. |

* The identified lagoons of this Plan are Thegoa Lagoon, Neilpo Lagoon, Boeill Lagoon and Peacock Creek.

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 indicated that flows in the water source are at low risk from extraction and that this water source has medium in-stream value. The overall risk to all flow classes is assessed as low.

Access Rules

- A review determined that the current access rules should be retained.

Improving protection of wetlands

- The NRC have recommended that replacement plans provide better protection for significant wetlands. DPE Water have developed criteria to identify significant 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 of new works will not apply to replacement works.
- Wetlands identified for improved protection were drawn from multiple datasets including the Long-Term Water Plan, Floodplain Management Plan, Ramsar listing, Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia and Endangered Ecological Communities.
- The significant wetlands identified for this plan are listed in Schedule 4 of the draft plan.
- More information on improving protection of wetlands is available in the 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, 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 another licence holder.
- 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 domestic and stock and unregulated river 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).

For domestic and stock and unregulated river 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.

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 Planning and Environment seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

In particular, we seek your feedback on **rules prohibiting new water supply works and trades within/near significant wetlands**

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

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Lower Murray-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2024* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition website](#).