

## Barwon-Darling/Lower Darling Critical Water Advisory Panel (CWAP)

*The Barwon-Darling/Lower Darling CWAP held its ninth meeting on 21 July 2020.*

A summary of the meeting outcomes is provided below.

Further information on the function and membership of critical water advisory panels can be found at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-water-advisory-panels](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-water-advisory-panels)

The Barwon-Darling River and the Lower Darling River are both currently in Drought Stage 2 – Recovering Drought according to the NSW Extreme Events Policy. Information on the drought status of these systems and others across the state can be found at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/critical-valleys-in-drought)

**Please note:** All reasonable efforts have been made to provide accurate and current information in this communique. This information is accurate as at 21 July 2020. However, changes in circumstances such as weather variability, water management decisions or any other events after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the material. Water Allocation Statements published by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water (DPIE-Water) provide the most accurate information on available water and allocations and are available at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements)

### Water availability update and forecast

WaterNSW publish weekly state-wide water availability reports on their website: [www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/availability](http://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/availability)

Conditions have remained relatively stable in the Barwon-Darling and Lower Darling over the last few months.

#### Barwon-Darling

Flows through the system from northern Basin rainfall events during February to April finished in May/June. Low flows are currently being observed along the length of the system. There is currently no pumping access for A, B and C class along the length of the unregulated Barwon-Darling.

The Walgett Weir was recently raised by 1 metre to increase its capacity to support town water supply needs and works to install a fishway at the site are well progressed. There are some small flows coming through to Walgett, causing the raised weir to fill and spill.

There is some water coming into the lower Barwon-Darling from the Macquarie-Castlereagh system and there is water going into the Macquarie Marshes. This should maintain some low flows through to the end of the Macquarie and provide some flows down to Wilcannia.

#### Lower Darling

As of 21 July, there was 486 gigalitres (GL) in Menindee Lakes storage. The lakes are being drawn down as a result of evaporation and minimum water sharing plan releases to the Lower Darling of

200 megalitres (ML)/day from the Weir 32 Wetherell outlet. Evaporation losses are currently larger than releases. Flows of 100ML/day are being maintained at Burtundy.

In terms of the long-range forecast, the next few weeks are expected to be dry and then wetter than average conditions are forecast for spring.

WaterNSW continues to hold regular Lower Darling River Operations Stakeholder Consultation Committee (ROSCCo) meetings to keep stakeholders informed of system conditions. The latest meeting was held on 20 July 2020.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO), Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Environment, Energy and Science (DPIE-EES) are currently planning environmental watering activities in the Murray and Lower Darling for the coming year in consultation with community representatives. More information on water for the environment in the Murray/Lower Darling can be found on the DPIE-EES website: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/water-for-the-environment/murray-and-lower-darling](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/water-for-the-environment/murray-and-lower-darling)

## 1 July allocations for 2020-21 water year

The 1 July allocations are largely reflective of the major storage conditions across the state. Some rain occurred during February to April, which improved in-stream conditions and soil moisture across most regions, but did not result in large improvements to storage levels. Small system improvements have provided good security for high priority access, but there have not been large allocations to broad scale irrigation (i.e. general security allocations). High priority needs are relatively secure for the next 12-18 months in most river systems.

Licence holders on the unregulated Barwon-Darling received full allocations. Lower Darling general security licence holders received a 30% allocation.

Water allocation statements can be found on the DPIE-Water website: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements)

A summary of current allocations and a valley-by-valley comparison of dam storage levels and opening allocations for 1 July 2019 and 2020 can be found at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/summary](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/summary)

## Barwon-Darling/Lower Darling drought webinar

A Barwon-Darling/Lower Darling drought information webinar was held on 22 May 2020. The webinar and presentation slides can be accessed on the DPIE-Water website. A 'What we heard' document, which notes all of the questions raised and answers to these questions has also been published: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/information-sessions](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/information-sessions)

Key issues raised for the Lower Darling included:

- Domestic water carting rebate - Lower Darling regulated river supply users accessing domestic water can now apply. Details can be found on the ServiceNSW website: [www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-water-carting-rebate](http://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-water-carting-rebate)
- General security allocations.
- Menindee Lakes Water Savings Project progress – a specific community working group has been formed to work through issues related to this project. Information on the project can

be found on the DPIE-Water website: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-recovery-programs/sustainable-diversion-limits/menindee-lakes](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-recovery-programs/sustainable-diversion-limits/menindee-lakes)

Key issues raised for the Barwon-Darling included:

- Walgett town water supply.
- Traditional Owner's involvement in water planning – a lot of work was done with First Nations in relation to water resource plans. There will also be consultation with Aboriginal groups on the Regional Water Strategies - this had to be postponed due to COVID-19.
- Toorale Water Infrastructure Project – to be completed in 2021:  
[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/water-for-the-environment/planning-and-reporting/toorale-water-infrastructure-project](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/water/water-for-the-environment/planning-and-reporting/toorale-water-infrastructure-project)
- Active management arrangements in the Barwon-Darling – to protect planned environmental water releases. These rules will come into effect on 1 December 2020. More information is available at:  
[www.industry.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/274095/active-mgmt-barwon-darling-wsp.pdf](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/274095/active-mgmt-barwon-darling-wsp.pdf)
- Northern Basin First Flush Event - information on how much of the flows were protected and how much was taken. More information on the event, including a report on the assessment of take and protection of flows, can be found on the DPIE-Water North-West Flows webpage: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/managing-drought-recovery/north-west-flows-in-early-2020](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/managing-drought-recovery/north-west-flows-in-early-2020)

## Amended Barwon-Darling water sharing plan

The amended water sharing plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2012 commenced on 1 July. The amended plan includes new provisions for individual daily extraction components, increased commence to pump thresholds for low flows, active management arrangements and protection of the first flush. Licence holders should be receiving letters with new daily extraction components soon. Information on the new rules can be found in a fact sheet: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/312244/whats-new-barwon-darling-fact-sheet.pdf](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/312244/whats-new-barwon-darling-fact-sheet.pdf)

A copy of the amended plan and information on the status of other water sharing plans in the region can be found at: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-sharing-plans/status/barwon-darling-west-region](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/water-sharing-plans/status/barwon-darling-west-region)

## Update - Northern Basin First Flush Assessment

Following the Northern Basin First Flush event in January- April 2020, the Minister for Water, Property and Housing, the Hon. Melinda Pavey MP, announced the establishment of an Independent Panel to undertake an assessment of how the event was managed. This was in response to representations from various sections of the community expressing concern over how the events were managed and communicated.

The Panel's draft report was on public exhibition until 9 August. The draft report makes ten recommendations, with a strong focus on improving communication and transparency. The final report is expected by 7 September 2020.

The draft report and information on how to make a submission is available on the DPIE-Water website: [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/northern-basin-first-flush-assessment](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/northern-basin-first-flush-assessment)

## Update – Western Regional Water Strategy

DPIE-Water has been gathering data and has started the drafting process for the Western Regional Water Strategy. The department has undertaken the first round of local council engagement through the Joint Organisations, including northern and southern meetings. Councils have provided feedback on potential risks and challenges in the Western Region. DPIE-Water has also been gathering input from other NSW Government agencies.

Planned consultation with Aboriginal communities and stakeholders this year on the Western RWS has been postponed due to COVID-19. A peak advisory group with representatives from NBAN, MLDRIN, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and NTS Corp has been established to provide the Department with advice on how to proceed with this engagement.

## Agencies present

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
  - Water Division (DPIE-Water)
  - Environment, Energy and Science Division (DPIE-EES)
  - Regional NSW
- WaterNSW
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
  - DPI Agriculture
  - DPI Fisheries
- NSW Health
- NSW EPA
- Wentworth Shire Council
- Bourke Council