

15 September 2023

Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source

Water allocation update

This resource assessment has produced a 5% increase to general security allocations in the Murrumbidgee regulated river water source.

The current general security allocation for 2023/24 is now at 44% of entitlement. Together with the total volume carried forward, current average water availability across all general security licences is around 72% of entitlement.

The allocation increase provided in this assessment is underpinned by higher than minimum inflows accruing in storages and an increase in the releases anticipated from the Snowy Hydro system.

Regulated conditions have returned for a majority of the system, with only minor surplus flows in the bottom reaches of the valley providing supplementary access. Nevertheless, individual rainfall events can reduce demand and increase river flows, resulting in unregulated flows at any time. Timely notifications will be provided and water users should look to waterinsights.waternsw.com.au for updated supplementary access details.

Water users are reminded that general security entitlement holders may exercise the Uncontrolled Flow (UCF) provisions of their licence (subject to their licence conditions). This means, they may be able to take unregulated water (if supplementary access has been declared for that reach) without debit from their allocated water. Details about UCF rules are provided below.

The valley has recorded some 50,000 megalitres of UCF usage to date. An improvement in resources due to UCF usage will only be realised if allocations increase sufficiently from future resource improvements resulting in a conversion of UCF usage to debit usage in accounts.

Improvements in general security above 80% total water availability (i.e. carryover plus current year allocations) will need to be matched with a commensurate allocation to the Provisional Storage Volume 1 in accordance with the water sharing plan.

With dry conditions forecast and inflows reducing substantially in recent weeks, water to ensure high priority needs for 2024/25 may be required. Each assessment going forward will need to consider the requirements for 2024/25 prior to allocating further water in 2023/24.

Year to date allocations for 2023/24

2023/24	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murrumbidgee	95%	44%	28%

Storage levels (as of 15 September 2023)

- Blowering Dam is about 92% full – stable – holding about 1,495,000 megalitres (ML).
- Burrinjuck Dam is about 94% full – falling – holding about 965,000 ML.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) seasonal outlook for October to December shows that rainfall will likely be below median. Daytime and overnight temperatures are expected to be hotter than median over this period.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook indicator remains on El Niño Alert. Models indicate that El Niño conditions may develop in the coming weeks. Also, positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) conditions may develop in the coming weeks. Should El Niño or positive IOD conditions develop, it will likely influence conditions towards drier than median.

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

Trade

Trade **out of the Murrumbidgee is open**, however; trade **into the Murrumbidgee is closed** (as of 15 September 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 is operated between limits of 0 GL and 100 GL, however the balance can move rapidly. The information presented in this statement is current at the time of writing.

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 **is in place until 30 September 2023**.

The restriction is based on the risk of spill from headwater storages in the NSW Murray system.

Interstate trades are typically accompanied by a reassignment of physical water (resource) 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. Currently, interstate trades into NSW cannot be safely underpinned by resource. Accepting incoming interstate trades in such conditions puts NSW Murray allocations and water users at risk.

More information on temporary water restrictions can be found at:

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions

Uncontrolled Flow (without-debit-take)

The water sharing plan permits general security water users to take water from uncontrolled flows (also known as unregulated flows) without debit from their account water. This is permitted during periods of announced supplementary access. Supplementary access details can be found at: waterinsights.watarnsw.com.au.

Without-debit-take from uncontrolled flows by individual general security entitlement holders is subject to the following rules as outlined in the water sharing plan:

- Without-debit-take from uncontrolled flows (i.e. during periods of unregulated flows when supplementary access is permitted) is allowed when the effective available water for the current water year is less than or equal to 70% of entitlement (i.e. 0.7 megalitres per unit share component). Exercising of without-debit-take provisions is subject to the licence conditions of the respective individual entitlement/licence.
- The effective available water for an individual general security entitlement is defined as
 - just the general security allocation for the current water year if the carryover is less than 15% of entitlement for the relevant licence, or
 - the general security allocation for the current water year **plus** the carryover less 15% of entitlement, when carryover is greater than 15% of entitlement for the relevant licence.
- The effective available water in the current water year **plus** without-debit-take from uncontrolled flows cannot exceed 85% of an individual entitlement's share components (i.e. 0.85 megalitre per unit share component). Should these respective values sum to greater than 85% (for example, due to allocations increasing), then without-debit-take volumes will be converted to debit-take, to the extent necessary to bring the sum down to 85% of entitlement. That is, the account will reflect the new allocation as already having been used.
- When the effective available water in the current water year is greater than or equal to 85% of entitlement (i.e. 0.85 megalitre per unit share) for an individual entitlement, all without-debit-take will have converted to debit-take.

Water users should refer to their licence conditions for individual application of these rules.

Next announcement

The next Murrumbidgee water allocation statement will be published on **Tuesday 3 October 2023**.

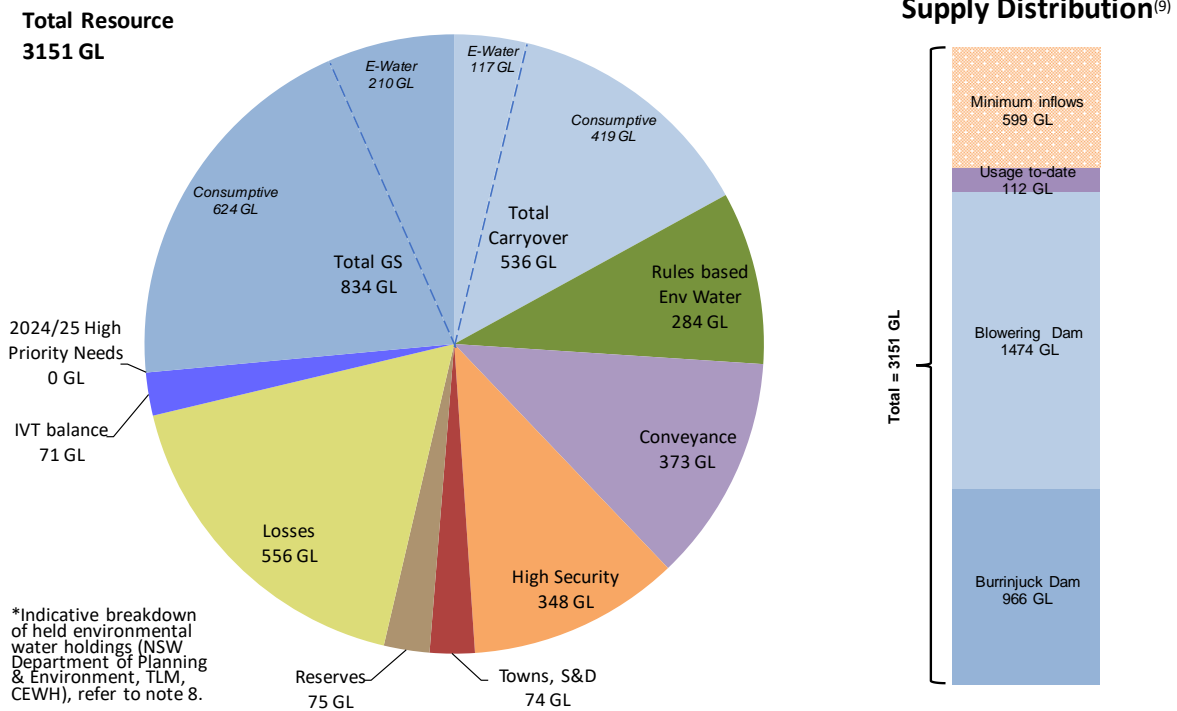
Note: Murrumbidgee statements are available from around 2:30pm on the day of the publication.

Murrumbidgee resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution* (15 September) for 2023-24	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	3,151
less	
Carryover ⁽⁸⁾	536
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽²⁾	284
Towns, Stock, Domestic (100%)	74
Reserves ⁽³⁾	75
Conveyance ⁽⁴⁾	373
Announced High Security (95%)	348
Losses (transmission, evaporation, operational) ⁽⁵⁾	556
Murrumbidgee IVT account (carryover remaining from 1 July) ⁽⁶⁾	71
Announced General Security (44%) ⁽⁸⁾	834
Year 2 (2024-25) high priority needs ⁽⁷⁾	0

*See notes below

Murrumbidgee resource distribution 2023-24 – 15 September 2023



*See notes below

Data sheet notes

- 1) Total available resource – total active storage volume (Blowering & Burrinjuck Dams) at the day of assessment plus any usable flows in transit plus minimum inflows for rest of the year plus Snowy Hydro’s assured Required Annual Release (RAR) (including any flex (pre-release) from the prior year), as well as estimated usage to date. Snowy Hydro’s net Jounama Release for this year (2023-24) is estimated to be about 520 GL (includes montane release).
- 2) Rules-based environmental water – water required to be set aside under water sharing plans to provide for riverine environments. Includes end-of-system flow requirements (currently 135 GL) and environmental water allowances (EWA1 = 100 GL, EWA2 = 49 GL, EWA3 = 0 GL). Excludes ‘licence-based’ environmental water also known as held environmental water (HEW). This total volume typically reduces as water is used during the year.
- 3) Reserves – required primarily under statutory plans, and mainly used for emergency purposes and critical needs. Includes 25 GL per dam as an operational reserve, and Provisional Storage Volumes (PSV1 = 25 GL, PSV2 = nil).
- 4) Conveyance entitlement – a category of access licence originally issued to Irrigation Corporations to facilitate delivery of water through their channel systems. Allocation to this category is prescribed in the water sharing plans and is a function of high and general security allocations. Conveyance licences in the Murrumbidgee valley can also carryover 30% of their entitlement.
- 5) Losses – the best estimate of the volume required to run the river under dry conditions to meet demands for the remainder of the water year. This includes storage evaporation, transmission losses and operational loss. This estimate is updated monthly.
- 6) IVT account carryover value into 2023-24. Does not necessarily reflect the current IVT balance. Balance was reduced by 18 GL (equating to the IVT spill which occurred on 14 August 2023) from 89 GL to 71 GL.
- 7) 2024-2025 high priority needs on 1 July - volume set aside to cover high priority needs on 1 July 2024, for ‘Year 2’, including estimated carryover.
- 8) Held environmental water (HEW) – licenced water administered by environmental water holders is reported here, with the associated portions of general security allocation and carryover also identified in the above pie chart. This reporting of held environmental water is the total credited to accounts (not usage) and is estimated to be 210 GL of GS, 11 GL of HS, 76 GL of conveyance allocation and 117 GL of GS carryover. These entitlements are held and/or managed either singly or jointly by various environmental holder groups, including the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, TLM and CEWH. Details on environmental holdings can be found on individual agency websites.
- 9) Supply Distribution – the distribution of supply includes volumes at the time of the assessment for the following categories: active volumes in the dams, indicative usage to-date (may be estimates prior to reconciliation with hydrographic updates) and assumed minimum future inflows (includes Snowy Hydro’s guaranteed inflows for the water year, and late season inflows).

Chances of improvement

The chances of improved Murrumbidgee general security allocations based on a repeat of historical inflows, are provided in the table below under a variety of conditions. The forecast uses all years of available 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 Nov 2023	1 Feb 2024
99 chances in 100 (extreme dry) (99%)	44%	44%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	44%	44%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	45%*	45%*
1 chance in 2 (median) (50%)	50%*	54%*
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 28% carryover on average.

*Should rainfall conditions suppress demand and create unregulated conditions, resource improvements will be governed by regulated usage, rather than inflow volumes. Suppressed usage will mean stunted resource improvement.

Water allocation guide

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water 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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