

15 March 2024

NSW Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers

Water allocation update

The NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated valleys are fully allocated for the current water year (2023/24). No further allocations are anticipated this water year based on the water sharing plan.

This Water Allocation Statement affirms the current water year allocations and provides an outlook for potential opening 2024/25 allocations on 1 July 2024, including likely increases in general security allocation under various inflows conditions to 1 September and 1 November 2024.

As both valleys reached full allocations in July 2023, and resources have continued to accrue since then, high priority needs for 2024/25 are assured and sufficient resource is available to provide opening allocations to general security based on current forecasts (details below).

An update to the 2023/24 outlook will be provided in mid-April and mid-May 2024. As we step closer to the 2024/25 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 2023/24 (current water year)

2023/24	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murray	100%	110% [#]	43% [*]
Lower Darling	100%	100% [#]	4% [*]

[#] Availability of allocation on individual licences is subject to account limits as per the rules in the water sharing plan.

^{*} Carryover in accounts can be considered forfeited and replaced by allocation when full allocations are announced.

Murray storage levels (as at 15 March 2024) *

- Dartmouth Dam is 96% full – holding about 3,685,000 megalitres (ML).
- Hume Dam is 72% full – holding about 2,170,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 75% full – holding about 505,000 ML.
- Menindee Lakes System is 54% full – holding about 940,000 ML.

* The NSW Murray share of this water is approximately 47%, 46%, 35% and 25% for these storages respectively, or 43% in total (averaged across all storages).

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for April to June shows that rainfall may be below average, particularly for the headwater catchments. Daytime and overnight temperatures are expected to be warmer than average.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook indicator indicates El Niño conditions are active. The ENSO index is expected to return to neutral through winter. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) indicator is currently neutral, but may become positive in coming months, meaning it may influence rainfall to be drier than average.

For further details: 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) 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 GL. Trade within the Lower Darling regulated river water source remains open.

Trade **out** of the Murrumbidgee is **closed** and trade **into** the Murrumbidgee is **open** (as of 15 March 2024). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website (www.watersw.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 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 may be placed when there is a high risk of spill in Murray storages.

While no restriction is in place currently, conditions are being monitored closely and a restriction may be placed to protect NSW water users from adverse impacts associated with accepting incoming trades when there is not physical capacity to hold a commensurate transfer of water due to full storages.

More information on temporary water restrictions can be found at the following link:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions>

Next announcement

The next monthly statement to update the 1 July 2024 opening allocation outlook will be published on Monday 15 April 2024.

Note: Statements are now available online from about 2:30pm on publication day.

Outlook for 2024-25

A water availability outlook for the start of the next water year (1 July 2024) 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 2024 water availability is conservatively based on a recession of current flows to extreme dry (99th percentile) conditions to the end of 2024-25. The resulting indicative forecast general security allocations for September and November 2024 under a range of possible inflow scenarios are provided in the table below to assist planning by water users.
- The forecast information is not guaranteed and should be used at one's own risk.
- Based on the full allocations in 2023-24 and limited usage to date, the maximum permissible carryover volume is estimated for the 2024-25 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 (2023/24) will be carried over unchanged to the next water year (2024/25). The IVT balance, up to 100 GL, is held in Murrumbidgee storages and is a callable resource available to the NSW Murray.
- 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 2024, regular assessments will be undertaken and allocation announcements made fortnightly on the 1st and 15th of each month, or the following working day, as usual, until full allocations are achieved.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2024 for the 2024/25 water-year – Lower Darling

- The Menindee Lakes System is around 54% full, holding some 940,000 megalitres (ML).
- The Menindee resource is currently shared with other states, under the Murray Darling Basin Agreement, as the system is holding more than 480,000 ML.
- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for all entitlements; **towns, domestic** and **stock** access licences, **high security** and **general security** entitlements in 2024/25 based on current forecast.
- Full allocations for **supplementary** access licences can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.
- Given healthy storage volumes and anticipated full allocations, **carryover** in accounts will be replaced by full allocations on 1 July as maximum account limits take effect.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2024 for the 2024/25 water-year – 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.
- 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 137,000 ML. In accordance with the water sharing plan, the balance will be fully borrowed on 1 July 2024 to support the general security allocation, with resource improvements providing payback before general security allocations can exceed 30%. Current estimates indicate that at least 50,000 ML will be repaid by 1 July.
- 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 2024, 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 2024	1 Nov 2024
99 chances in 100 (extreme) (99%)	30%	30%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	32%	45%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	37%	110%
1 chance in 2 (mean) (50%)	47%*	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 may limit resource improvements if usage is limited, as spilling storages and low usage means liabilities do not retire from the storages, and therefore resources do not improve.

Water Allocation Guide

The NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and 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 the following link:

<https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process>

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

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