

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).

Dry conditions to the end of April have not significantly improved resources. The resource situation has not materially improved since the last publication in mid-April so the forecast opening allocations for 2024/25 remain largely unchanged.

This statement is the last statement for the 2023/24 water year. Opening allocations for the 2024/25 water year will be announced on 1 July 2024. Water users are reminded that forecasts in this statement are indicative only and not guaranteed allocations. They 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 May 2024) *

- Dartmouth Dam is 94% full – holding about 3,630,000 megalitres (ML).
- Hume Dam is 59% full – holding about 1, 785,000 ML.
- Lake Victoria is 57 % full – holding about 385,000 ML.
- Menindee Lakes System is 53% full – holding about 925,000 ML.

* The NSW Murray share of water is approximately 46%, 43%, 44% and 26% for storages respectively, or 43% averaged across all storages.

Climatic outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology's seasonal outlook for June to August shows that there is no clear indication of drier or wetter than average conditions for most of the catchment. Daytime and overnight temperatures are expected to be warmer than average.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook is now on La Nina watch, with some signs that La Nina conditions may develop later in 2024. The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) indicator is currently neutral but may become positive in coming months. This combination makes very dry conditions less likely.

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 May 2024). 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 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.

Is it prudent for water users to liaise with their trade facilitators to stay up to date with the latest trade opportunities and reforms.

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 and a restriction will be placed to protect NSW water users if necessary. More information on any temporary water restrictions can be found at the following link: <https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/our-work/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions>

Next announcement

The next water allocation statement will be published on **1 July 2024**. This statement will cover all regulated valleys and communicate the commencing allocation for all regulated entitlements in the state, including the NSW Murray and Lower Darling regulated valleys.

Following the 1 July 2024 water allocation statement, regular fortnightly statements will commence on 15 July 2024. Fortnightly statements are typically published on the 1st and 15th day of the month, or the next business 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 usage to date, the maximum permissible carryover volume is expected for the 2024-25 water year. That is, it is estimated 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.

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

- The Menindee Lakes System is around 53% full, holding some 925,000 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** licenses in 2024/25 based on current forecast.
- Full allocation for **supplementary** access entitlement can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.
- The Lower Darling Environmental Water Allowance will be replenished to its maximum 30 GL .
- Given significant 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 at least 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** entitlements will be allocated commensurate with high security and general security allocations in accordance with water sharing plan rules.
- The current Barmah-Millewa Environmental Water Allowance (BMEWA) account balance is approximately 93,000 ML (corrected since last statement due to database issue). In accordance with the water sharing plan, the balance is fully borrowed on 1 July 2024 to support the general security allocation, with resource improvements providing payback before general security allocations can exceed 30%.
- A small outstanding BMEWA balance may be payable from 1 July after which resource improvements can be considered for increasing allocations to general security entitlements.
- Water will 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 range of conditions from wet to extreme dry. 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 conservative and 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%)	33%	49%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	40%	110%
1 chance in 2 (mean) (50%)	51%*	110%
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%)	58%*	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 BMEWA is fully paid back in all scenarios.

* 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 this regulated system is available at the following link:

[Resource assessment process | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

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