

Report card for the Barwon-Darling Water Source

Report card 1 of 1

Water source context

Water Sharing Plan:	Barwon-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2025
Area:	71.66 km ²
Inflowing water source:	Croppa and Whalan Creek, Border Rivers Regulated River, Barwon River, Gil Gil Creek, Thalaba Creek, Gwydir Regulated River, Pian Creek, Baradine Creek, Lower Namoi Regulated River, Lower Macquarie River, Marra Creek, Lower Bogan River, Paroo River, Warrego River, Condamine/Culgoa Creeks, Moonie Creek, Yanda Creek.
Receiving water source:	Lower Darling Regulated River

River flows

Flow records:	1889 to present at Barwon River at Mungindi (416001)
	1985 to present at Barwon River Upstream of Presbury Weir (416050)
	1938 to present at Barwon River at Mogil Mogil (422004)
	1889 to present at Barwon River at Collarenebri Main Channel (422003)
	2022 to present at Barwon River at Caloola (422035)
	1886 to present at Barwon River at Dangar Bridge (Walgett) (422001)
	1999 to present at Barwon River at Boorooma (U/S Macquarie Junction) (422026)
	1999 to present at Barwon River at Geera (D/S Macquarie Junction) (422027)
	1892 to present at Barwon River at Brewarrina (422002)
	1999 to present at Barwon River at Beemery (U/S Culgoa Junction) (422028)
	1999 to present at Darling River at Warraweena (D/S Culgoa Junction) (425039)
	1895 to present at Darling River at Bourke Town (425003)

1944 to present at Darling River at Louth (425004)

1965 to present at Darling River at Tilpa (425900)

1886 to present at Darling River at Wilcannia Main Channel
(425008)**Stream type:** Unregulated

Basic landholder rights

Domestic and stock rights estimate: 283 ML/year**Native title rights estimate:** As required under relevant Native Title determinations

Licensed water entitlements

Total surface water entitlement: 247,816 ML/year (267 licences)

- **Domestic and stock:** 962 ML/year (20 licences)
- **Local water utility:** 5,373 ML/year (7 licences)
- **Unregulated river:** 1,488 ML/year (1 licences)
- **Unregulated river (A Class):** 9,856 ML/year (110 licences)
- **Unregulated river (B Class):** 133,069 ML/year (87 licences)
- **Unregulated river (C Class):** 45,746 ML/year (15 licences)
- **Floodplain harvesting (unregulated river):** 51,322 ML/year (27 licences)
- **Supplementary water (Aboriginal environmental):** 0 ML/year (0 licences)

River sections and management zones

Table 1. List of river sections and management zones

River sections	Management zones
River section 1	a) Mungindi to Boomi River Confluence Management Zone, b) Boomi River Confluence to Upstream Mogil Mogil Weir Pool Management Zone, c) Mogil Mogil Weir Pool Management Zone, d) Downstream Mogil Mogil to Collarenebri Management Zone, e) Collarenebri to Upstream Walgett Weir Pool Management Zone, f) Walgett Weir Pool Management Zone,
River section 2	g) Downstream Walgett to Boorooma Management Zone, h) Boorooma to Brewarrina Management Zone,
River section 3	i) Brewarrina to Culgoa River Junction Management Zone, j) Culgoa River Junction to Bourke Management Zone,

River sections	Management zones
River section 4	k) Bourke to Louth Management Zone, l) Louth to Tilpa Management Zone, m) Tilpa to Wilcannia Management Zone, and n) Wilcannia to Upstream Lake Wetherell Management Zone.

Long-term average annual extraction limit (LTAAEL)

Table 2. Long-term average annual extraction limit

Current rules	Proposed rules
<p>The LTAAEL must be calculated at the end of each water year. The LTAAEL is the long-term average annual extraction that would occur under Cap baseline conditions as agreed under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement at the commencement of the plan.</p> <p>The LTAAEL must be calculated over the duration of available climate records using the hydrological computer model approved by the Minister.</p> <p>Notes in the Plan explain that the long-term average annual extraction that would occur under specified conditions is 223 gigalitres per year. The component that would be taken by irrigation and industry under the same conditions indicates a long-term average annual extraction volume of 214 gigalitres per year (189 gigalitres from 'within channel' extractions).</p>	<p>The long-term average annual extraction limit is the long-term average annual extraction from the water source that would occur under Cap baseline conditions as agreed under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement at the commencement of this Plan (2012).</p> <p>The Plan includes a note that calculation of the long-term average annual extraction in the water source under this section indicates a long-term average annual extraction volume of 204.4 GL</p>

Managing access licences

Each water access licence has its own share component (volume of the licence) and a water allocation account that acts like a bank 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 other licence holders.
- Water is debited from the account when water is extracted from a water source or traded out (sold). Total extraction from a work (pump, bore, etc.) will be measured through metering or logbooks.

Carryover and individual account limits

Unlimited carryover of account water at the end of each water year is permitted for unregulated river access licences.

No carryover is allowed for domestic and stock, local water utility or specific purpose access licences (incl. supplementary [Aboriginal environmental] access licences).

For unregulated river access licences, the maximum water account debit (annual take limit) 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.

Licences specified in Schedule 1A of the current plan are exempt from this annual take limit for 5 years or until they have reduced the amount of water in their water allocation account to equal to or less than 10 times the share component of their access licence at the time the rule commenced.

The draft plan proposes to extend the maximum timeframe for an additional 2 years, to 18 February 2030, to allow these licensees sufficient time to reduce their account balances by trading out account water in reasonable volumes.

Access rules

There are minimal changes proposed to access rules in the Barwon-Darling unregulated river water source. The current access rules for unregulated river, unregulated river (A Class), unregulated river (B Class) and unregulated river (C Class) access licences, including individual daily extraction components, resumption of flows, active management and flow class thresholds. The rules can be found in tables 4 and 5 of the [rule summary sheet](#).

The rules for floodplain harvesting licences are available in a separate [rule summary sheet](#).

The changes proposed in the replacement plan are outlined in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3. Proposed changes to access rules

Management Zone	Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Collarenebri to Upstream Walgett Weir Pool Management Zone	Flow reference point	<p>Take is not permitted unless the flow class relevant to your licence class has been announced, as determined at the relevant flow reference point/s. 2 flow reference points are used for this management zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barwon River at Collarenebri Main Channel gauge (422003), and • Barwon River at Tara gauge (422025) 	<p>Take is not permitted unless the flow class relevant to your licence class has been announced, as determined at the relevant flow reference point/s. 2 flow reference points are used for this management zone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barwon River at Collarenebri Main Channel gauge (422003), and • Barwon River at Caloola gauge (422035)

Management Zone	Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
All	Floodplain harvesting access licences	<p>Take not permitted under a floodplain harvesting (unregulated river) access licence when there is less than 195 GL in the Menindee Lakes system (as defined in the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement).</p> <p>The Menindee Lakes volume will transition from a ‘total storage’ volume to an ‘active storage’ volume once the Murray-Darling Basin Authority has published operating procedures that allow the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to deliver state entitlements to water under the Murray Darling Basin Agreement via the Great Darling Anabranch.</p> <p>Rule ceases to apply during periods when a flow in the Darling River at the Wilcannia gauge (425 008) will remain at or above 7,900 ML/day.</p>	<p>Take not permitted under a floodplain harvesting (unregulated river) access licence when there is less than 250 GL in the Menindee Lakes system (as defined in the Murray–Darling Basin Agreement).</p> <p>250 GL in Menindee Lakes Storage is the volume that must be able to be delivered from the Menindee Main Weir to the Lower Darling Regulated River.</p> <p>Rule ceases to apply during periods when a flow in the Darling River at the Wilcannia gauge (425 008) will remain at or above 7,900 ML/day.</p>

Table 4. Proposed changes to access rules for whole water source

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Take from in-river pools	N/A	Take is not permitted when the in-river pool is less than full capacity
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	N/A	Take is not permitted when the off-river pool is less than full capacity

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Exemptions	<p>Some exemptions apply to specific access rules for the water source and/or management zone, including for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and hygiene • domestic use • local water utility/town water supply • take from a run-off harvesting dam <p>Specific licences are listed in Schedule 3 of the plan.</p>	No change, however specific licences with exemptions are now listed in Schedule 5 of the draft plan.

Water supply work approvals

Water supply work approvals allows the construction and use of a work which takes water from a river, lake or aquifer. Examples of water supply works are water pumps, water bores, spearpoints, dams, weirs, irrigation channels, banks and levees. Approvals are granted through WaterNSW to construct and operate water supply works.

The purpose of water supply work approvals is to ensure that the construction or use of a work does not cause negative impacts on water sources and their dependent ecosystems, or to access of water by other authorised water users.

A water use approval authorises its holder to use water for a particular purpose, such as irrigation, at a particular location (water source). Every approval includes conditions that are in place to reduce adverse impacts. For more information, please visit the [WaterNSW works approvals](#) website.

Table 5. Draft rules for constructing surface water supply works

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
In-river dams	Permitted in 3 rd order streams and above in this water source	Not permitted. High in-stream value means this water source will now prohibit in-river dams on 3 rd order and above streams. An exemption for applications for town water supply purposes has been included.
Protection for wetlands	N/A	<p>No new or amended works permitted within or 3km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.</p> <p>No new or amended works permitted within wetlands indicated on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan unless there will be no more than minimal harm to the wetland concerned.</p>

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
		This rule does not apply to replacement works.

Trading

Trading covers conversion of access licence to a new category (for example from unregulated river to aquifer), 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) and water supply works dealings (relocation of an extraction point).

The only change proposed to the trading rules for the Barwon-Darling water source is to provide protection for wetlands. These new rules are outlined in Table 6 below. The current trading rules can be found in Table 6 of the [rule summary sheet](#).

Table 6. Proposed changes to water trading (dealing) rules

Type	Current rules	Proposed rules
Protection for wetlands	N/A	<p>Not permitted into or within 3 km upstream of a Ramsar wetland.</p> <p>Not permitted into WSP prescribed wetlands indicated on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map of the draft plan.</p> <p>Trade between licences within the same WSP prescribed wetland is permitted.</p>

Key factors for decisions

Access rules

Minimal changes to access rules are proposed in the draft plan, as many recent review recommendations have been implemented in plan amendments during the life of the plan. These include:

- Changing the A-class activation flows
- Introduction of the resumption of flows rules
- Active management of held environmental water
- Implementation of individual daily extraction components (IDECs).

Improving protection of wetlands

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) have recommended inland plans provide better protection for important wetlands. The department has developed criteria to identify specific 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, Endangered Ecological Communities and the existing list in the 2012 plan.
- The no minimal harm exemption only applies to new WSP prescribed wetlands on the WSP Prescribed Wetlands Map.
- A map of the WSP prescribed wetlands identified for this plan is available on the department's website.
- More information on improving protection of wetlands is available in a fact sheet.

Other key rules – no change proposed

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.

Applications for supplementary water (Aboriginal environmental) access licences may also be accepted up to 500 ML/year per licence for enhancing the Aboriginal cultural value of important lagoons and billabongs, up to a total of 2,000 ML/year.

Other reasons are identified in Section 10 of the Water Management (General) Regulation 2018.

Public exhibition

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water seeks feedback from the public on the suitability of the proposed rules for this water source.

In particular, we seek your feedback on:

- **the extension of the annual take limit exemption for licences with large, historically accumulated, account balances,**
- **proposed rules to protect WSP prescribed wetlands including prohibiting new water supply works and trades within or near WSP prescribed wetlands.**

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

To read the draft *Water Sharing Plan for the Barwon-Darling Unregulated River Water Source 2025* and supporting fact sheets, please visit the department's [Public Exhibition](#) website.