

## Lower Darling meeting No. 4 – 3 April 2020

*A subset of the Barwon Darling/Lower Darling CWAP convened on 3 April 2020 to discuss the recommencement of flows to the Lower Darling.*

A summary of the meeting outcomes is provided below.

Further information on the function and membership of critical water advisory panels can be found in this [fact sheet](#).

The Lower Darling is currently in drought Stage 3 – Severe Drought according to the NSW Extreme Events Policy. This valley has recently been de-escalated from Stage 4 – Critical Drought because of the inflows into Menindee Lakes, which has enabled flows to be re-commenced in the Lower Darling.

**Please note:** All reasonable efforts have been made to provide accurate and current information in this communique. This information is accurate as at 3 April 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)

## Forecast flows to Menindee Lakes and block bank removal

Regular flow forecast updates (currently every Monday, Wednesday and Friday) are being published by WaterNSW on their operations updates webpage - [www.watarnsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/operations-updates](http://www.watarnsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/operations-updates)

Total flows into Menindee Lakes have reached 250gigalitres (GL).

It is estimated (as at 1 April 2020) that 365-405GL will reach Menindee Lakes as a result of the current flow event. There is the potential for further small improvements to this forecast.

The bulk of flows have now passed Bourke, with flows starting to recede quickly. Flows at Bourke are currently 5000ML/day.

Some rain has fallen in northern NSW over the Namoi catchments, but this will not provide a significant improvement to runoff and forecast flows in the Barwon Darling.

Further rain is forecast today over the Namoi. There have been some isolated falls of up to 50mm across central NSW and more rain has been seen in the west of the state, which may feed smaller tributaries just upstream of Lake Wetherell.

The last block bank, located at Ashvale, has now been removed.

The travel time for flows between Bourke and Menindee Lakes is approximately 10-12 days.

Flows at Tilpa and Wilcannia are currently 10,000ML/day and 11,000ML/day respectively.

## Managing releases to the Lower Darling

WaterNSW has been releasing close to 3000ML/day from Lake Wetherell since 20 March. Releases will be held at this level until Monday and then flow rates will decrease slowly to 300ML/day.

Yesterday the flow had reached Bald Hill and should reach Pooncarie next week around 7 April.

Lake Wetherell is holding 160GL and transfers to Lake Pamamaroo are continuing. There is currently a total of 86,000GL in Lake Pamamaroo. The total Menindee Lakes storage is sitting at just under 219GL.

The Copi Hollow block bank has been removed, but a small bank has been left in place to enable stock and domestic access to water until flows are large enough to pass over the bank.

## Water resource allocation

Temporary restrictions limiting access to critical needs only in the Lower Darling were lifted on Monday 30 March.

Water users now have access to all water remaining in accounts for the rest of the water year.

The latest water allocation statement was released on Wednesday and can be accessed on the DPIE-Water website here - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements)

Allocations for high priority licences, including town water supply and stock and domestic, have now been increased from 50 per cent to 100 per cent. High security allocations have also increased from 30 per cent to 100 per cent. General security carryover is also now fully available.

The Menindee Lakes storage is only sitting at 12 per cent capacity, which means there is not enough water available to make an additional general security allocation at this time. DPIE-Water needs to ensure flows can be maintained to the Lower Darling for as long as possible.

## Update on water quality and fish health

Regular updates on the progress of flows down the Lower Darling and water quality monitoring are being provided on the DPIE-water website here - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/drought-recovery/menindee-lakes-lower-darling-river](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/drought-recovery/menindee-lakes-lower-darling-river)

Water quality remains good as flows move down the Lower Darling. Dissolved oxygen levels are currently above 5mg/L and salinity levels are down, within safe levels for fish populations. Flows are moving quickly and water is mixing well.

As expected, turbidity has been increasing as flows move downstream.

No fish deaths have been reported to date along the Lower Darling.

Two aerators downstream of Pooncarie, put in place to support remaining fish populations, will be removed when the pools begin to fill.

The details around managing water levels and water quality in the Wentworth Weir pool when flows arrive are being finalised. Wentworth Weir water users will be notified once plans are complete.

## Communications

Updates on the progress of flows and water quality monitoring will be published by DPIE-Water each week. These can be found at - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/drought-recovery/menindee-lakes-lower-darling-river](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/drought-recovery/menindee-lakes-lower-darling-river)

DPIE-Water's water allocation statements provide information on current allocations and resource outlooks and for the Murray/Lower Darling Valley are published fortnightly.

WaterNSW is also publishing flow forecasts and operational updates at [www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/operations-updates](http://www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/operations-updates).

## Agencies present

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
  - Water Division (DPIE-Water)
  - Communications and Engagement
  - Environment, Energy and Science Division (DPIE-EES)
- NSW Office of Drought Response
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
  - DPI Agriculture
  - DPI Fisheries
- WaterNSW
- Wentworth Shire Council

## Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 9 April.

---

© State of New South Wales through Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2020. The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (April 2020). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that the information upon which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment or the user's independent adviser.