

Community update for Menindee and Lower Darling-Baaka

Update on current environmental water flush

The NSW Government flush of 45GL from the upper Menindee Lakes through the lower Darling-Baaka River commenced on 29 May to help clear the current infestation of blue-green algae impacting local communities. Releases for the pulse will be complete on Wednesday 19 June.

Before and after images

Thank you to the community members who contributed photos taken before and after the flush this month. Figure 1, taken by Stephen Parker, shows before the flush above Ellerslie, 40km North of Pomona. Figure 2, taken by Barb at the Old Wharf Café Pooncarie, shows after the flush at Pooncarie pump site, the turbid water is flowing through.



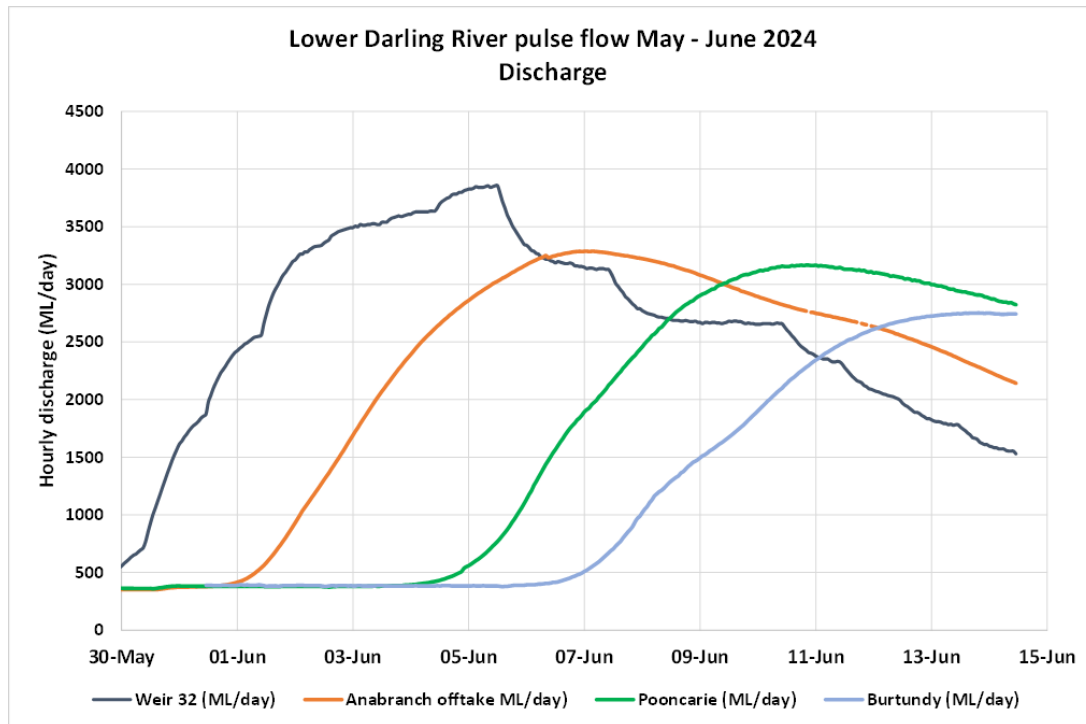
Figure 1



Figure 2

Tracking the pulse flows down river

The graph below shows the arrival of the flows at key measurement points along the river. The flow peak has reached Burtundy (2,740 ML/day).



Sediment testing results

DCCEE Water has been undertaking investigations into water quality and sediment to determine if there were any possible other contributors to the recent deaths of Golden Perch in Feb-March 2024.

Sediment sampling results so far have indicated:

- There were no detectable pesticides in the sediments.
- Heavy metals were in very low concentrations, all below guidelines for sediment excluding Nickel which was slightly above at some sites.
- Sulfidic sediments were present at all sampled sites and will be investigated further.

We are continuing to look at possible causes of the recent (Feb-March 2024) Golden Perch deaths by investigating water quality, groundwater and the food web.

NSW EPA emergency management exercise to be held in Menindee

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), will be in Menindee on Tuesday 18 June to lead an incident management exercise to test the current emergency management arrangements for a mass fish death event.

In response to the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer's report into the 2023 Menindee fish deaths, the EPA has developed an Interim Mass Fish Death Event Response Sub Plan and will now test that plan with representatives from local and state government agencies involved in the emergency response. Key community stakeholders have also been invited to attend as observers.

During the exercise, agencies will work through a hypothetical mass fish death scenario to test arrangements for the notification process and trigger points, the roles and responsibilities of each agency and community engagement.

Following the exercise, on Wednesday 19 June, the EPA will hold a morning tea and community drop-in at the Country Women's Association Hall in Menindee from 9am to 11 am. The community are invited to come along to ask questions which the community about the exercise and the current emergency management arrangements.

DPI Fisheries activities on the Darling-Baaka

DPI Fisheries will have teams out on the Darling-Baaka over the coming weeks progressing fish actions, including a range of research projects that will cover electro fishing, netting, and movement monitoring. DPI Fisheries will also progress on-ground activities with local Aboriginal community representatives during the week of June 17 that aim to build awareness in fishing methods and opportunities to develop capacity within the community to assist with fish biomass removal and respond to future fish death events as possible, whilst also demonstrating monitoring techniques used as part of related research activities.

Send us your 'before and after' photos of the river

In addition to staff regularly monitoring the river, we would appreciate photos you may have taken currently and then photos you capture in the coming days and weeks to help us track improvements in the water quality as the flush moves through. If you are happy to share your photos, please email them to water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au

What does a red alert for blue-green algae mean?

Red Alert warnings apply only to untreated water at the identified location and will remain in place until monitoring and test results confirm that the risk is sufficiently diminished.

People should avoid consuming untreated water from this waterbody and prevent pets and livestock from drinking this water. People should avoid recreational activities such as swimming, water skiing, canoeing and any other activity that brings them into contact with this waterbody until the red alert warning is lifted.

Potentially toxic blue-green algae may cause gastroenteritis if consumed, while contact can cause skin and eye irritations. Consumption of water containing algal toxins may cause liver damage and other health problems.

Boiling the water does not remove algal toxins. People who suspect they have been affected by blue-green algae should seek medical advice.

People should not eat mussels or crayfish from red alert warning areas. A precautionary approach to eating fin fish from red alert warning areas is advised. Any fish caught should be cleaned and washed thoroughly in uncontaminated water; the internal organs should not be eaten. Avoiding fishing during a bloom is the best way to minimise risk.

Updates and information about blue-green algae blooms and red level warning areas can be obtained by 1300 662 077 or visiting www.waternsw.com.au/water-quality/algae

Is the drinking water safe?

Yes. Essential Water provide treated water to the township of Menindee and Wentworth Shire Council provide treated water to Shire communities.

The quality of drinking water for customers has not been impacted by the high levels of blue-green algae identified in the Darling River in the Far West of NSW.

Community members should continue to avoid untreated water taken directly from the river as it is not considered potable and encourages local residents to prevent pets and livestock from drinking the river water.

Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: waterqualitydata@dpie.nsw.gov.au
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW DPI Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.

- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEEW Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths>
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes>
- Operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>