



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

## Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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Issue 11 | 15 February 2008

### Inter-state water sharing arrangements

On 5 February 2008, the Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia announced the application of new water sharing arrangements between the three States. These arrangements ensure that all States are allocated sufficient water early in the year to provide for critical human and stock needs, and for consumptive use to maintain water in the Murray Valley. The continuing arrangements under “*option 3i*” were causing the State’s shares to further diverge from normal water sharing under the Murray-Darling Basin agreement. Consequently, large imbalances between the States were developing that would have to be reconciled at a later date.

The new “*option3L*” provides for:

- each State to use its tributary inflows,
- the “shared” resources of the Murray River (principally the inflows upstream of Albury) are shared equally between the three States, and
- half of the volume made available to South Australia from its share of the resource to be allocated to the other States to reduce the existing imbalances.

The new arrangements apply to all inflows occurring after the 29 November 2007, which has resulted in an immediate increase in water available to New South Wales.

### Current water availability

As of 11 February 2008, the total volume of water available to NSW Murray Valley water users is 530 gigalitres (GL). This improvement is the result of the new sharing arrangements, inflows from the Darling River, and minor inflows into the Murray River.

From 12 January to the 12 February 2008, Albury received 143 millimetres (mm) of rain, Deniliquin received 53 mm, Wangaratta 90 mm, and Tumbarumba received 111 mm.

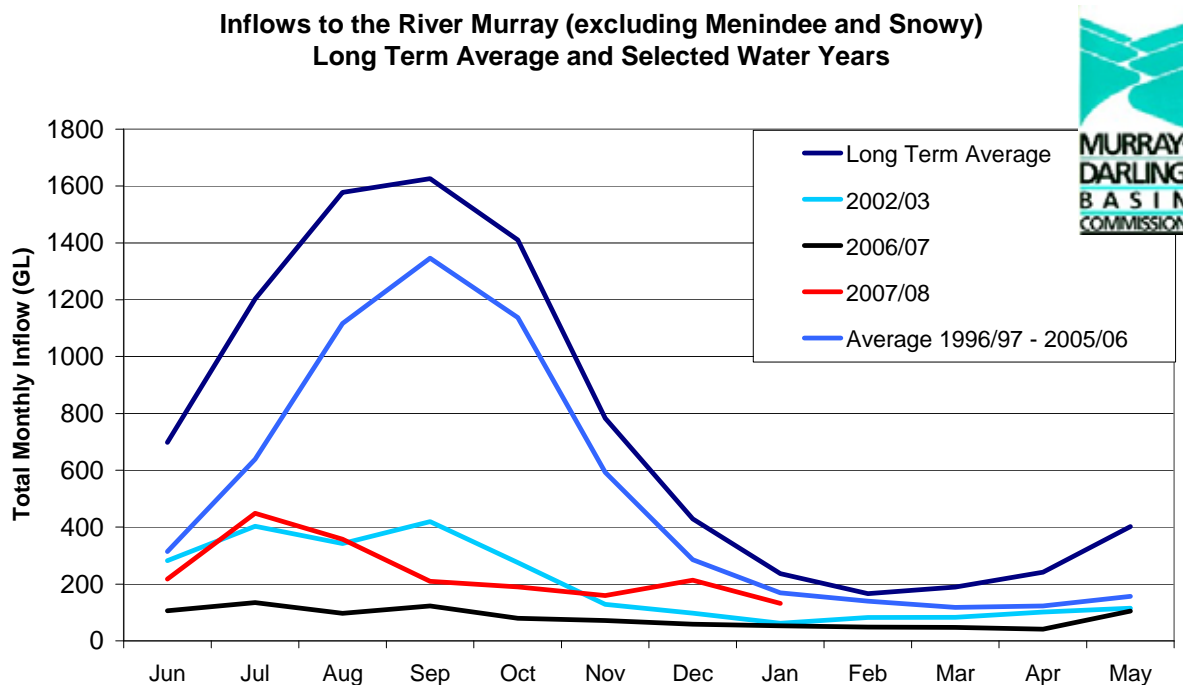
In addition the localised heavy falls in the catchment area for Hume Dam in the last week have yet to be assessed.

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**Storage levels as at 12 February 2008:**

Storage @ 12 February 2008	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 12 January 2008 to 12 February 2008 GL
Hume Dam	489	16	-145
Dartmouth Dam	686	15.6	+11
Lake Victoria	355	53	+17
Menindee Lakes Storage	366		+ 273

This graph shows the long term average inflows into the Murray River



**What this means**

Inflows have been sufficient to allow for full repayment of all suspended water from 2006 and to reserve the 75 GL required to meet basic human needs for next year.

The rainfall that has occurred since mid-December enabled a replenishment flow of 30 GL to be made to the Wakool, Merran and Colligen-Neimur systems. Of this, 6 GL was provided by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) for environmental purposes. This flow has provided much needed stock and domestic supply and improved water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife.

This flow will cease from 17 February 2008. Until resources improve substantially, additional water cannot be made available and landholders are advised to consider alternate arrangements now for future stock and domestic requirements. Priority will be given to diverting tributary flows in Autumn and Winter to maintain supply.

Despite recent improvement in water availability, the outlook for 2008/09 remains grim without further substantial inflows. There is not yet sufficient resource guaranteed for 2008/09.

Good flows into the Barwon-Darling system have relieved some of the pressure for water users in that part of the State. Broken Hill's water supply is now secure for more than 21 months and the releases into the Lower Darling which commenced on 7 January 2008 will continue for the immediate future. Releases from the Menindee Lakes into the Lower Darling have contributed approximately 80 GL to the Murray River and is available to NSW Murray Valley users.

While these flows are good news, the drought is far from over. Menindee Lake's storage is only expected to increase to approximately 25 per cent of capacity over the coming weeks as the result of the Queensland floods.

### **Carry over**

The total amount of water that can be used in 2008/09 is 100 per cent of entitlement plus any water purchased

All water in licensed accounts other than that for local water utilities (town water) or stock and domestic licences can be carried over. This will occur automatically on the 30 June 2008.

Water in accounts will be forfeited when the sum of the carry over volume and the 2008/09 allocation reaches 100 per cent. Additional water can be purchased in 2008/09.

#### Example:

<i>Licence entitlement –</i>	<i>100 ML</i>
<i>Carry over from 2007/08 –</i>	<i>40 ML</i>
<i>Sept 08 Allocation announced at 70% ~</i>	<i>70 ML</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>110 ML</b>

*This licence forfeits 10 ML of water. This is because the maximum that can be held on this licence is 100 ML unless additional water is purchased in 2008/09.*

This applies to both general and high security licences.

### **Trade**

All water in accounts is tradeable. Close off of all trade in the Murray Valley including inter-state and inter-valley will be close of business on 30 April 2008.

### **Accounting for contingency water**

It is anticipated that all accounts will be reconciled before the end of the water year.

Critical water has been limited to a maximum of 50 per cent of licensed entitlement. This water will be debited against normal allocations once High Security allocations reach 50 per cent of entitlement.

Accounting for this contingency water will occur when a 50 per cent high security announcement is made. At this point the contingency water will be debited from the licence holders account.

## **Town water supply**

Town water allocations in the Murray Valley will remain at 50 per cent of entitlement.

The majority of towns in the Murray Valley have moved to level 3 water restrictions that allow for a maximum of 8 hours of outside watering per week.

A ban on the watering of all private lawns remains in place. The order restricting the use of all water taken from the river or from bores was made in October 2007.

It has been disappointing to have an increase in the number of reports of people watering lawns, particularly given that:

- local rainfall has freshened gardens;
- irrigators do not have access to any allocation water; and
- we still do not have water to secure industry needs next year.

## **Compliance**

The drought contingency planning will only work if everyone adheres to the restrictions and is careful with all water use. To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the Department of Water and Energy's Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to [watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au](mailto:watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au).

## **Outlook for 2008/09**

According to the Bureau of Meteorology, La Nina is now firmly established and strengthened over the past month. It is expected to continue until Autumn 2008.

## **Water availability outlook**

The following diagram shows the approximate probabilities of improvements in water availability occurring by 1 May 2008 and will change throughout the season.

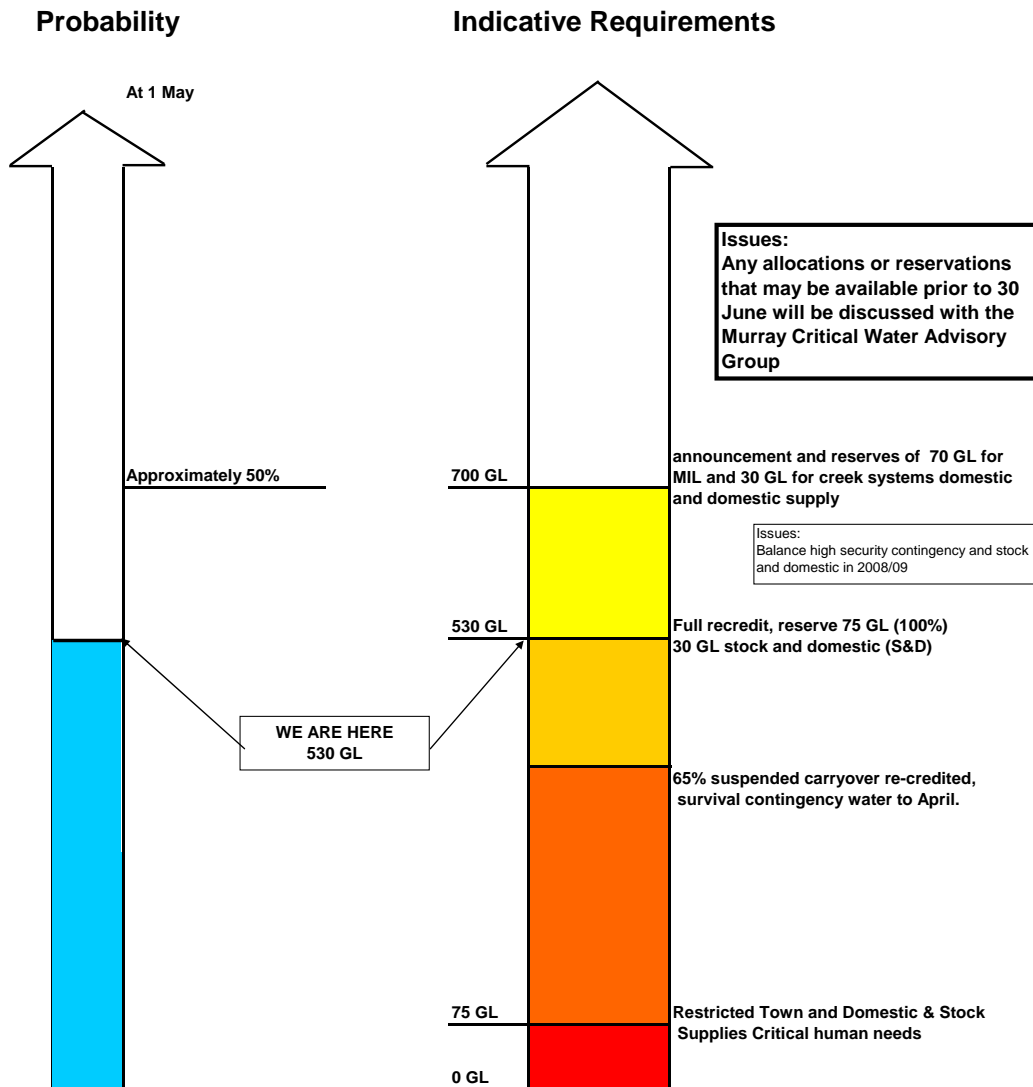
Probabilities of resource increases beyond May 1 are heavily dependant on inflows from the Snowy system. These are traditionally more reliable in late Winter-Spring.

The outlook for 2008/09 is more promising due to La Nina's influence. The probability of remaining in severe drought is much less than may be indicated by historical records.

Under median conditions it is likely that General Security allocations will commence by late Winter.

# NSW Murray Valley Outlook

Based on end of January Assessment



Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900