



Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

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Current water availability

Since 15 January 2008, Wagga Wagga has received 140.8 millimetres (mm) of rain, Griffith received 48 mm and Yass received 108.7 mm. Despite the very good rainfall, the Murrumbidgee River system only received 25,000 megalitres (ML) in inflows in January, which is well short of the average monthly inflow of 119,000 ML.

There has also been little effect on storage levels, but the wet conditions have caused a significant reduction in river losses and irrigation demand for the month.

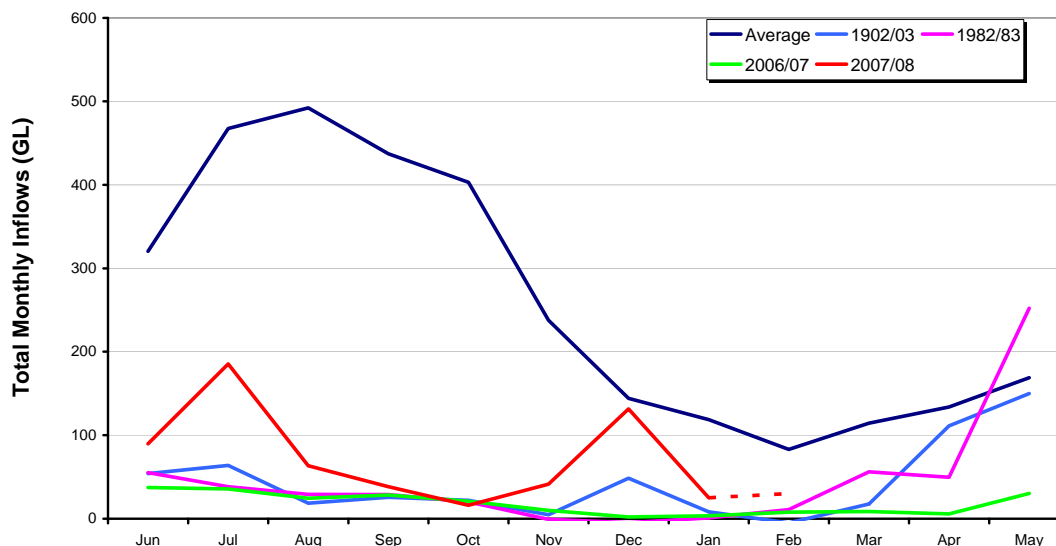
Whilst inflows into Snowy Scheme storages were above average for the month of December, they have dropped back to below average for January, due mainly to the onset of some hot dry weather.

Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 13 February 2008.

Storage @ 13 February 2008	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 11 January 2008 to 13 February 2008 GL
Burrinjuck Dam	427	41.6	0
Blowering Dam	422.6	24.8	-35

This graph shows the long-term average system inflows comparing 2007/08 to recent drought years.

Total Murrumbidgee Valley System Natural Inflows (excluding Snowy)
Selected Drought Years-v-Long term average



What this means

The improvement in water resources means that General Security allocations will increase from 9 per cent to 13 per cent of entitlement. This has occurred mostly due to less than expected system losses. In addition, a reserve of 50 gigalitres (GL) of water is being set aside as allocations increase, to ensure that water supply for critical requirements and carry over in 2008/09 can be delivered.

Water trading in 2007/08

All water in accounts may be traded except for town water supply and stock and domestic allocations. This includes all inter-valley and inter-state trades.

Water can be traded back into the Murrumbidgee Valley, as long as there is nett trade into the Murray Valley.

An important exception to these arrangements is for those users who participated in the 2002/03 Snowy Hydro borrowing arrangements. Water re-credited in 2007/08 from that which was suspended in 2006 may not be traded until the water borrowed from Snowy Hydro has been repaid.

All trade in the Murrumbidgee Valley **must be finalised** by close of business on 30 April 2008.

Carry over

Licence holders may carry over 15 per cent of their licensed entitlement into 2008/09. This means that licence holders can carry over all unused water that is in the licence holder's account as of 30 June 2008, up to a limit of 15 per cent of their total entitlement. However, if the drought continues, water may not be delivered when requested.

Town water supply

The water allocation for town water supply is at 100 per cent of entitlement. However, suppliers are advised to continue to remain conservative with **all** water use and continue to implement a water restriction that limits the use of outside watering.

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.

Water availability outlook

Currently, the Southern Oscillation Index is well into the positive range, and the outlook for continued rainfall and La Nina conditions is very good. The following probabilities are indicative only and have been determined taking a conservative approach. Additional reserves to deliver carry over and underpin delivery of essential water have been considered in the assessment.

A 'rocket' has not been provided this month because of the uncertainties associated with the assessment of losses and inflows from Snowy and irrigator business management decisions.

Estimates of probabilities of improvements by 1 May 2008:

Allocation increase for General Security	5%	9%	14%
Chances of it occurring by 1 May 2008	9 in 10 chance	3 in 4 chance	1 in 2 chance

Forecasts of water availability for next year by late winter:

There is sufficient water under a repeat of the worst recorded inflow sequence to provide for carry over, basic human needs, and critical industry requirements for 2008/09. However, continuous supply for all sections of the regulated system could not be initially guaranteed.

There is a 9 in 10 chance that there will be a total availability of 50 per cent for High Security licence holders. There is a 3 in 4 chance that all high security requirements will be available, and a 1 in 2 chance that General Security licence holders will receive modest initial allocations.

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