



critical water planning

for the Lower Darling

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CURRENT WATER AVAILABILITY

Rainfall in the Border Rivers and Namoi Valley catchments during July and August generated flows which are now reaching the Barwon Darling system. These flows are expected to reach Menindee by mid October, extending the current flow that is now slowly moving towards the Menindee Lakes. Currently this flow is approximately 70 river kilometres downstream of Wilcannia.

The following table shows the pattern of flow in megalitres per day (ML/day) since 25 August 2007:

	25 Aug	26 Aug	27 Aug	28 Aug	29 Aug
Bourke	304	287	269	240	223
Louth	446	421	401	389	371
Tilpa	373	353	333	306	297
Wilcannia	Data not available				
Pooncarie	120	113	113	113	113

From 27 July to 27 August 2007, 100 millimetres (mm) of rain fell at Glen Innes, 101 mm at Tamworth and 110 mm at Tenterfield.

The following table shows storage volumes in the Lower Darling as at 27 August 2007:

Storage @ 27 August 2007	Volume ML	Full volume ML
Lake Wetherell	20 500	192 000
Lake Pamamaroo	33 000	277 000
Total Menindee Lakes Storage *	53 500	1 680 000

* In addition to the water stored in the main body of the Menindee Lakes, Lake Tandure currently holds approximately 3,900 megalitres (ML), some of which is being pumped to increase water available for use.

RIVER MANAGEMENT

Water releases to the Darling River from Lake Pamamaroo commenced on 1 August 2007 to replenish pools in the River before the warmer months. These releases should continue until mid September. However, the duration of this release will be shorter than was originally expected due to high evaporation losses caused by wind and warm weather.

The flow from these releases should reach the Wentworth Weir pool by the second week of September. When the releases from Lake Pamamaroo have ceased, Weir 32 will be sealed to stop any further flow downstream and conserve water in the Weir pool and Lake Wetherell.

PROPOSED FLOW MANAGEMENT OF LAKE PAMAMAROO RELEASE

Water from Lake Pamamaroo is currently being released at a rate of 150 ML/day. Salinity levels at the head of the flow are estimated at 1,400 ECs*. To minimise the possibility of these saline flows reaching the Murray River, licence holders may have the opportunity to pump at rates to reduce the volume of flow into the Wentworth Weir pool. This will prevent water from "over topping" the temporary weirs Old Burtundy and Belcatherine.

*(EC units – micro-Siemens per centimetre)

CRITICAL SURVIVAL WATER FOR PERMANENT PLANTINGS

Crop data survey information has been analysed by the Department of Water and Energy and licence holders will be informed by 10 September 2007 of their share of available water.

Licence holders who applied for "Tandure" water will be contacted in writing. Once the payment for the pumping has been received, the Department of Water and Energy will be notified and will inform the licence holders of their share.

Licence holders who applied for survival water downstream of Weir 32 will be advised of their drought allowance by 10 September 2007. Licence holders who have not heard from the Department of Water and Energy by this date are urged to contact their local office.

Licence holders who are pumping from downstream of Weir 32 should consult with neighbours and then approach the Department of Water and Energy in Buronga, with their proposed weir pool or river reach water sharing arrangement. The Department will then validate the rostering arrangements and give approval for pumping to commence.

Initially trade of water in the Lower Darling will not be permitted until the licence shares are fully resolved. This will be reviewed following assessment of the upstream inflows.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WATER AVAILABILITY IMPROVES

It is anticipated that there will be minimal flows into Lake Wetherell in October or November this year. Without further inflows into catchment areas, the current flows will not be sufficient to recommence flows downstream of Weir 32.

COMPLIANCE ISSUES

The proposed drought management plan can only work successfully if all licencees abide by the rules and only pump in accordance with their share.

The penalties for breaching licence conditions or for diverting more water than you are legally entitled to can be severe. The Department of Water and Energy can suspend or cancel licences, and issue fines of up to \$132,000 for an individual or \$275,000 for a Corporation.

Diverting more water than you are legally entitled to is effectively stealing from your neighbours, the broader community, and the environment. Unlawful extraction will not be tolerated.

The Department of Water and Energy will be increasing compliance activities in the Lower Darling and has the support of key industry and stakeholder groups. Those licence holders who have recently stated publicly that they will not conform to the current restrictions will be specifically targeted during surveillance operations.

To ensure that the water management system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the Department's compliance staff in Buronga on (03) 5051 6218. Alternatively, suspected breaches can be reported to your State Water Customer Service Officer, who will refer reports to the Department of Water and Energy. All reports will be treated confidentially.

CONTACT

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