



Critical water planning for the Lower Darling

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Current water availability

Rainfall in the Border Rivers region over the past fortnight has produced some good falls in the order of 25 to 50 millimetres (mm). There have been some minor inflows into the Border Rivers; however they are not expected to reach Bourke until the end of November. Without further rainfall only a small volume, if any, will reach the Menindee Lakes.

On 6 November the flow at Bourke was 28 megalitres per day (ML/day). From 6 October to 6 November, 109 mm of rain was recorded at Glenn Innes, 68 mm at Tamworth, 109 mm at Bathurst, 54 mm at Moree, 35 mm at Bourke, and 39 mm at Menindee.

Since 1 October, approximately 8,900 Megalitres (ML) has flown past Wilcannia, of which approximately 6,200 ML made its way into Lake Wetherell. The water level in Lake Pamamaroo is now too low to gravity divert water into the Weir 32 pool. As a result, small releases from Lake Wetherell into the Weir 32 pool commenced on 7 November.

The following table shows storage volumes in Lower Darling storages as at 6 November 2007.

Storage @ 6 November	Volume ML	Full volume ML	% capacity
Lake Wetherell	26 930	193 000	14
Lake Pamamaroo	11 820	270 000	4.4
Total Menindee Lakes Storage *	40 470	160 000	2.54

Water for permanent plantings

Flow over Weir 32 ceased on 12 October. The only water available now below Weir 32 for irrigation, is the survival water for permanent plantings from natural and constructed river pools.

A survival allowance has been determined based on two megalitres per hectare (ML/ha) of crop and a pumping roster organised for growers along the three weir pools below Lake Pamamaroo. Rationing will be at 0.5 ML/ha to mid November, followed by a further allocation until the weir pools are depleted.

Currently the only water available to irrigators above Weir 32 is water from savings created by pumping from the residual pool of Lake Tandure. This water is available to all irrigators of permanent plantings in the area if they share in the pumping cost of approximately \$100 per ML. The majority of local irrigators who have contributed to the scheme have water in their accounts now. Menindee irrigators can still apply to participate in the scheme by contacting the Department of Water and Energy. All water, including carryover, will need to be ordered. State Water will take into account deliverability when considering each application.

There will be no further flows in the Darling River downstream of Weir 32 until:

1. significant improvement in inflows and storage levels occur, and
2. Broken Hill's water supply has been reserved for at least 21 months.

Irrigators with access to groundwater supplies can access this water under the same rules as applied in the 2006/07 water year.

Compliance issues

The proposed drought management strategy can only work successfully if all users abide by the rules and only pump in accordance with their share, and the rules provided by either the Department of Water and Energy or State Water.

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 in Buronga via phone: 03 5051 6218 or email: offence.report@dnr.nsw.gov.au. All reports will be treated confidentially.

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