



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

Pre-Christmas rain improves irrigation supply in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys

15 January 2008

Pre-Christmas rain has delivered a welcome gift to battling Murray and Murrumbidgee valley licence holders, boosting water supplies for irrigation

Substantial rain before and during the Christmas period in the Southern part of the Murray-Darling Basin has increased flows and water storage levels in the drought-stricken Murray and Murrumbidgee river systems in Southern NSW

There was now enough water available to:

- Re-pay a further 10 per cent of the water suspended in NSW Murray Valley licence holders' 2006/07 accounts, taking the total amount of water now repaid to 65 per cent.
- Increase water allocation for Murrumbidgee Valley General Security licence holders by six per cent, so they can now access nine per cent of their licensed water entitlement.
- Lift Murray Valley town water supply restrictions from level 3a to level 3 to allow a maximum of eight hours of outside watering per week.
- Secure a further three per cent of the 75 gigalitres of water needed to meet critical human needs in 2008/09. This brings the total to 32 gigalitres.

Rainfall across the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys in December was patchy and the occasional high falls were not enough to break the drought. Water availability is still critical in both valleys.

The Department of Water and Energy's main priorities are to continue to reduce water losses in the river systems by preventing evaporation and to conserve as much water as possible for the next water year.

The provision of water for stock and domestic use is also a high priority.

In the Murray Valley, 20,000 megalitres of water is currently being diverted into the Wakool-Yallakool, Colligen-Niemur and Merran creek systems to provide water for stock and domestic use and environmental benefits.

The extremely hot weather combined with the problem of evaporation and extremely dry river beds, has meant that this water has not gone as far as first expected. At this stage it will not replenish all creeks and water courses and flows will cease this week.

While water for these systems remains a priority, no more can be committed until water availability in the region improves significantly.

In the Murray Valley, the allocation for town water supply will remain at 50 per cent of entitlement and stock and domestic will remain at 75 per cent of entitlement.

High Security licence holders in the Murrumbidgee Valley currently have a water allocation of 90 per cent and access to five per cent of the water suspended in their 2006/07 accounts.

To combat the effects of the extreme temperatures on public amenities and gardens, local water authorities are now advised that they may move to Level 3 water restrictions

Due to the serious water shortage in the southern basin, all water users are reminded to continue to be very conservative with water. A ban on the watering of private lawns continues in the Murray Valley.

Flows from the flood in the Castlereagh River were now moving past Bourke and are heading for the Menindee Lakes system.

This water, combined with other inflows from the Darling Basin, has secured Broken Hill's water supply for at least 21 months, provided a 100 per cent allocation for High Security licences in the Lower Darling, and allowed for the re-commencement of flows in the Darling River downstream of Menindee Lakes.

More detailed information is available in the Department's Murray and Murrumbidgee critical water planning communiqués - available online at www.dwe.nsw.gov.au