



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

## Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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### Current water availability

The rainfall in November has been above average across much of the Murray-Darling Basin. However, inflows in November have yielded only small improvements in water availability in the Murray Valley. Inflows have been better than those received at this time last year, but still remain well below average. The Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) noted that the period June to November 2007 is the 8th driest out of 116 years of records.

Total Murray Valley storage is around 550 gigitalitres (GL) lower than this time last year, and the lowest for this time of year since 1940, when system storage capacity was only about 20 per cent of current capacity. All improvements have been shared by the three states in accordance with the agreed MDBC modified sharing rules. These arrangements are currently being reviewed.

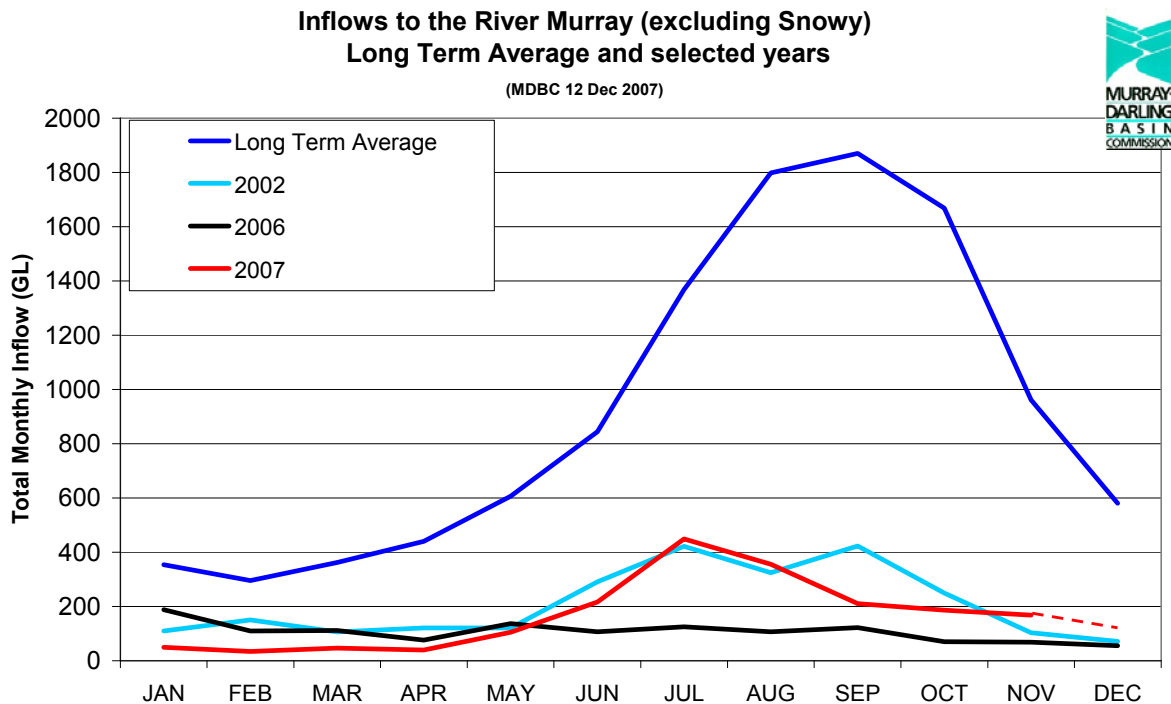
From 12 November to 12 December, Albury received 57.6 millimetres (mm) of rain, Deniliquin received 40.2 mm, Wangaratta 26.4 mm, and Tumbarumba 105.8 mm.

### Storage levels as at 12 December 2007.

Storage @ 12 December 2007	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 12 November to 12 December GL
Hume Dam	752.5	24.7	-62
Dartmouth Dam	662.1	16.95	-55
Lake Victoria	382	56.42	-45
Menindee Lakes Storage	31	1.94	-8

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



### What this means

Inflows have been sufficient to allow for a further five per cent to be re-credited to accounts suspended in 2006 and an additional seven GL to be added to the NSW reserves for 2008/09. This means that a total of 55 per cent has now been repaid and 29.5 GL is now in storage to meet basic human needs for next year.

A limited release of 8,000 megalitres (ML) of NSW resource is currently being delivered into the Wakool River and Merran Creek systems. This is to provide water for essential stock and domestic purposes and to benefit the environment. The flows will give landholders along the Wakool River and Merran Creek systems access to fresh water for stock and domestic use for the first time in months. Other effluent streams will be considered for flushes from tributary inflows if there is sufficient increase in water availability.

In previous years flows in the Edward River have increased over summer as more water is released to meet irrigator's needs. However, this summer NSW does not have the same level of demand nor sufficient resources to provide increased flows to the Edward River. While it is expected that flows in the Edward River will rise slightly during December, normal pool levels will not be retained in the Edward Weir upstream of Steven's Weir. The operation of the Edward River Weir pool by NSW is consistent with the management of other weir pools in the Murray-Darling River system, which is being lowered wherever possible to minimise evaporation.

### Carry over and trade

Licence holders are likely to be able to carry over up to 50 per cent of their licensed entitlement in 2007/08 if the water sharing plan remains suspended. This includes all water that is still suspended in accounts.

For example: A licence holder with a licensed entitlement of 300 ML, can carry over unused water up to a maximum of 150 ML, provided that it is available in their account.

Delivery of water for licence holders wishing to carry over water for use in 2008/09 will be given a high priority. All water in accounts is tradeable. Close off of all trade in the Murray Valley will be close of business (COB) on 30 April 2008.

### **Contingency water**

The contingency water program is now finished, with the allocation of water in the process of being finalised.

Critical water has been limited to a maximum of 50 per cent of licensed entitlement. This should allow a water budget to be prepared and implemented for the remainder of the water year. This water will be debited against normal allocations once the water resource availability improves.

### **Town water supply**

Town water supplies will remain at 50 per cent of entitlement. This allocation is likely to be increased if and when additional water becomes available and is needed to meet the needs of towns at level 4 restrictions: equivalent to no outside water use.

Councils are encouraged to maintain level four water restrictions unless they have purchased a volume of water equivalent to 20 per cent of the volume required for Level 4. They can then ease to a Level 3a restriction.

All residents of the Murray Valley are reminded that a temporary water restriction order applies to the taking of surface and groundwater water from the NSW Murray Regulated River Water Source and all associated alluvial aquifers including the Lower and Upper Murray groundwater sources.

Within a town water supply area the use of this water is restricted to the town water restriction in place. Outside the town water supply area, the order restricts the use of water from these sources on domestic lawns. The order applies to **all towns** supplied by water taken from these water sources in the Murray Valley. Additional *frequently asked questions* on this issue are available on the Departments website.

### **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**

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) has advised that the La Nina event is now well established, and is starting to have its effects felt in Australia. The BoM are also predicting that summer temperatures will also be higher, potentially reducing any run off that could be generated.

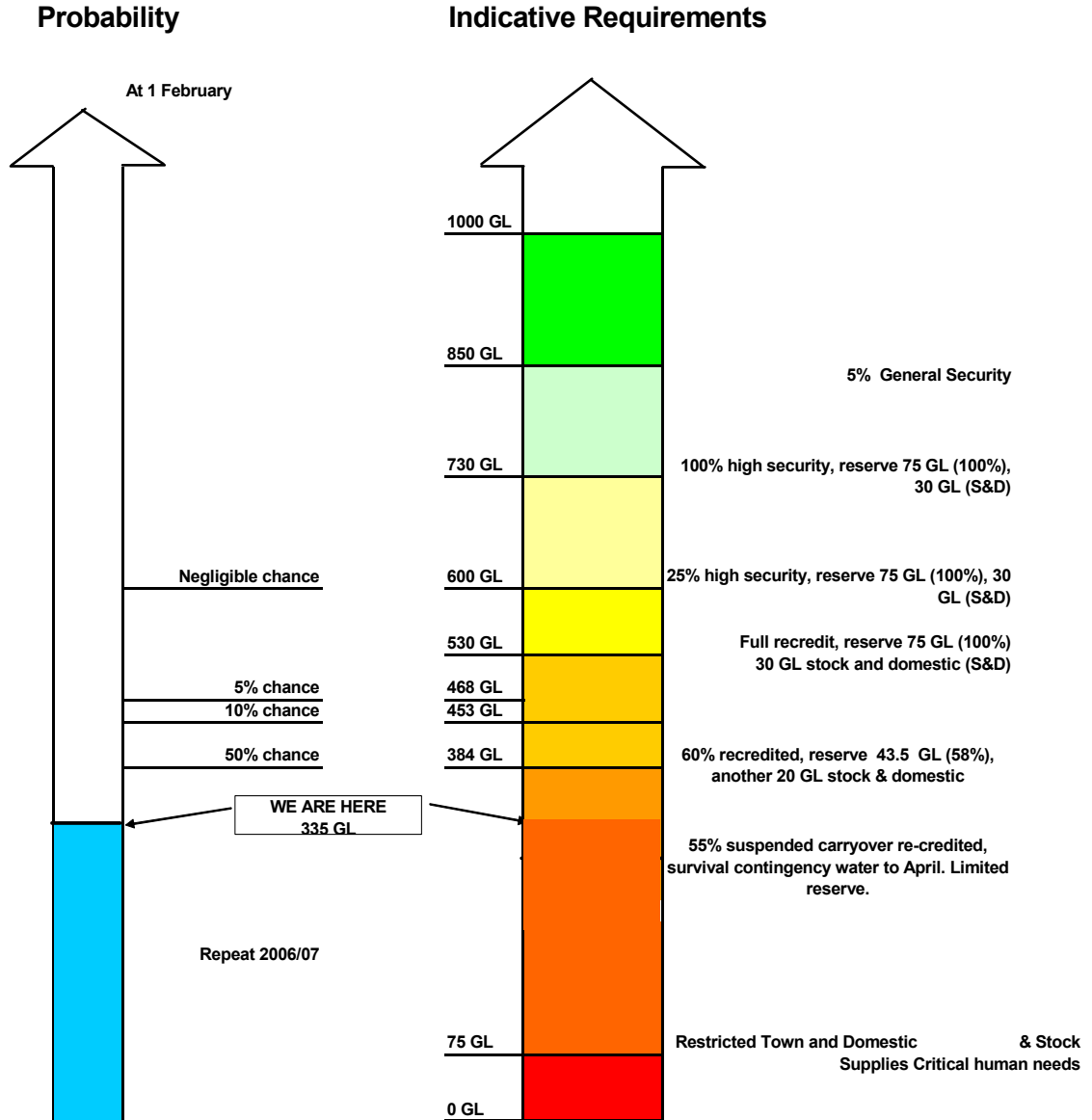
### **Water availability outlook**

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

## NSW Murray Valley Outlook

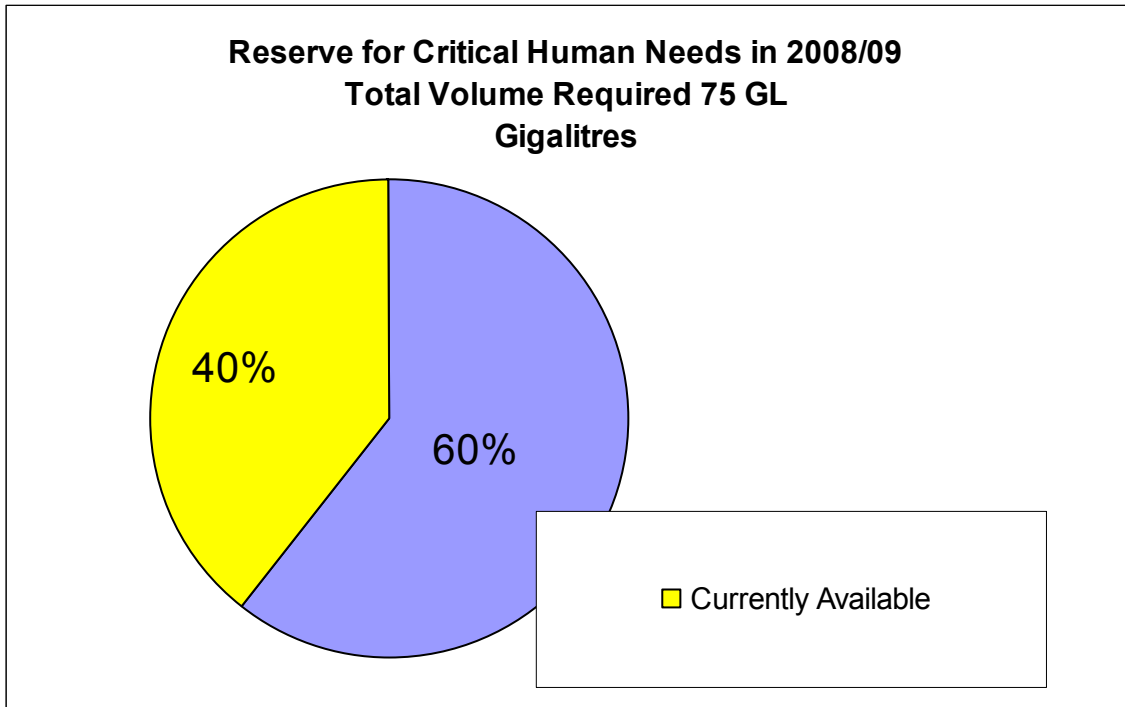
Based on end of November Assessment with adjustments for early December rain

These probabilities use statistics based on continuing drought and may underestimate the probabilities of allocation increases that require wet conditions.



Water is now being reserved to meet the needs of critical town water and domestic supply for 2008/09. The following pie chart shows how we are progressing.

Unless there is very heavy rain in the catchment, the next resource update will be on 15 of January 2008.



**Contact:** Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900