



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

Issue 10 | 15 January 2008

Current water availability

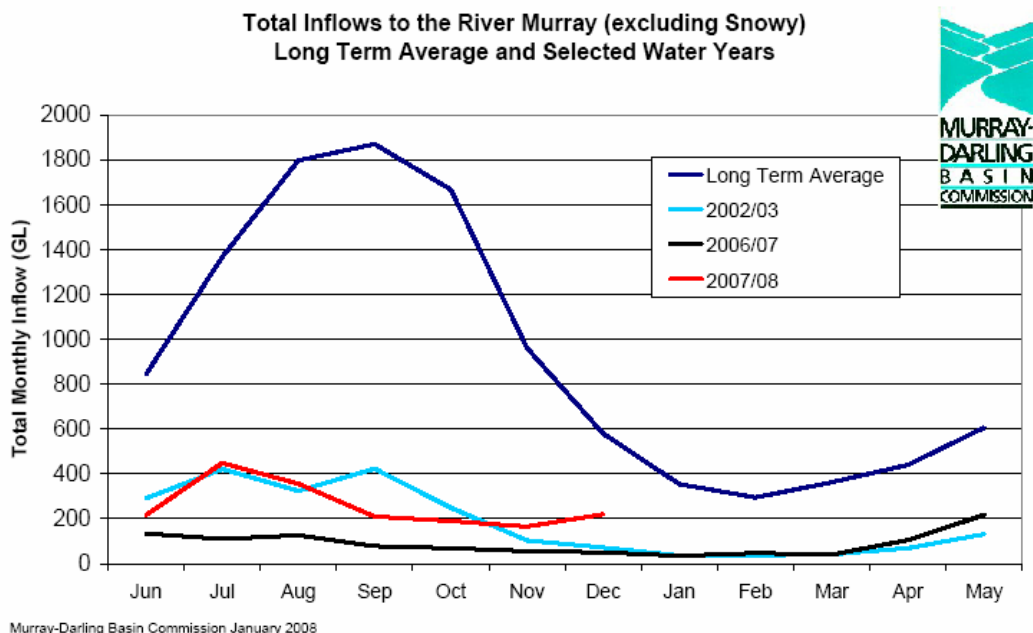
As of the 11 January 2008 the total volume of water available to NSW Murray Valley water users is 370 GLs. This volume is available for the 2007/2008 water year. This is an increase of 35 GL since the December 2007 resource assessment.

From 12 December 2007 to the 12 January 2008, Albury received 49.8 millimetres (mm) of rain, Deniliquin received 60.8 mm, Wangaratta 72.6 mm, and Tumbarumba received 135.2 mm.

Storage levels as at 11 January 2008

Storage @ 11 January 2008	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 12 December 2007 to 11 January 2008 GL
Hume Dam	634	20.6	-91
Dartmouth Dam	675	15.3	+13
Lake Victoria	338	50	-44
Menindee Lakes Storage	93	5.8	+62

This graph shows the long-term average inflows into the Murray River



What this means

Inflows have been sufficient to allow for a further 10 per cent of water suspended in 2006 to be re-paid to accounts, bringing the total repaid to NSW Murray irrigators of 65 per cent.

An additional 3 GL has been added to the NSW reserves for 2008/09. This means that a total of 32 GL or 43 per cent of the volume required to meet basic human needs for next year is now held in storage.

The substantial rainfall that occurred just prior to Christmas 2007 yielded 6GL that was made available for stock and domestic release to the Colligen and Niemur systems.

A total of 20 GL, including 6 GL of environmental water (from the Murray Darling Basin Commission) has been made available to replenish the Wakool River, Merran Creek and the Colligen Niemur systems.

This volume is not sufficient to complete the planned replenishment project and flows are now decreasing. Until resources improve additional water cannot be made available and landholders are advised to consider alternate arrangements now for future stock and domestic requirements.

Despite the heavy rainfall and flooding in the northern parts of NSW, the situation in the Murray Valley remains dire.

Good flows into the Barwon Darling system have relieved some of the pressure for water users in that part of the State. Broken Hill's water supply is now secure for more than 21 months and the releases into the Lower Darling, which commenced on 7 January 2008, will continue until end of March 2008. This release is commencing with a substantial flush that will make its way into the Murray River, subsequently becoming available to Murray users.

While these flows are good news, the drought is far from over with Menindee Lake's storage expected to only increase to approximately 25 per cent of capacity over the coming weeks.

Carry over

Licence holders will be able to carry over the balance of their account into the 2008/2009 irrigation season. Transactions must be completed by the COB 30 June 2008.

For example:

Licence holder has a **1000 ML** licensed entitlement

As of the 20 June 2008 their account is

Credits in 2007/08

150 ML (Contingency or survival water allocated 2007/2008)

100 ML (water purchased in 2007/2008)

300ML (repaid from suspended water in 2006/2007)

Total 550 ML

200ML (still owing from 2005/2006)

Total use in 2007/2008 400ML (contingency water, trade water and half of repaid water)

Balance unused 150ML

Licence holders' carry over is;

150ML unused 2007/2008 + 200 suspended (2005/2006) = **total in account** for the start of the 2008/2009 water year is **350ML**

NB:

1. unlimited carry-over will be available and can be made up of contingency water, water purchased in and repaid 2005/2006 water
2. Suspended water is made up of 2005/2006 carryover and suspended water, both having equal value, 2007/2008 carry over will be added to this account, with repayment having the same priority.

If high security allocations reach 97 per cent in the 2008/2009 irrigation season, the total water available to use is the balance of 2006/2007 water to re-credited plus 97 percent. This will be in addition to water that is currently suspended in accounts. In the example above, if the suspended 200 ML is not re-credited by 30 June 2008, then the maximum credits the Department of Water and Energy will make in 2007/2008 will be 970 ML (97%) and 200 ML (suspended), ie a total of 1170 ML.

Trade

All water in accounts is tradeable. **All trade** that is inter-state and inter-valley in the Murray Valley **must be finalised** by close of business (COB) on 30 April 2008.

NSW will continue to make announcements on resource availability until 30 June 2008.

Accounting for contingency water

Critical water has been limited to a maximum of 50 per cent of licensed entitlement. This water will be debited against normal allocations once high security allocations reach 50 per cent of entitlement.

Accounting for this contingency water will occur when a 50 per cent high security announcement is made. At this point the contingency water will be debited from the licence holders' account.

For example if;

50 per cent allocation = 500 ML for a licence holder plus 150ML (carry over 2007/2008) plus 200 ML (returned suspended water) minus 150ML contingency water - then a total of **700ML** is available for 2008/2009.

Town water supply

Town water allocations in the Murray Valley will remain at 50 per cent of entitlement.

Towns that have purchased water to relax water restrictions may now go to Level 3 and towns that have not purchased water may move to Level 3a.

Level 3 water restrictions allow for a **maximum** of 8 hours per week of watering on shrubs and trees.

Level 3a watering allows for a **maximum** of 4 hours per week of watering. A ban on the watering of all private lawns remains in place.

The easing of restrictions will allow Councils greater flexibility to water public sports grounds, gardens and other amenities that are of important value to the community. The Department will continue to work with the Murray Regional Organisation of Councils to assist Councils in this matter.

Compliance

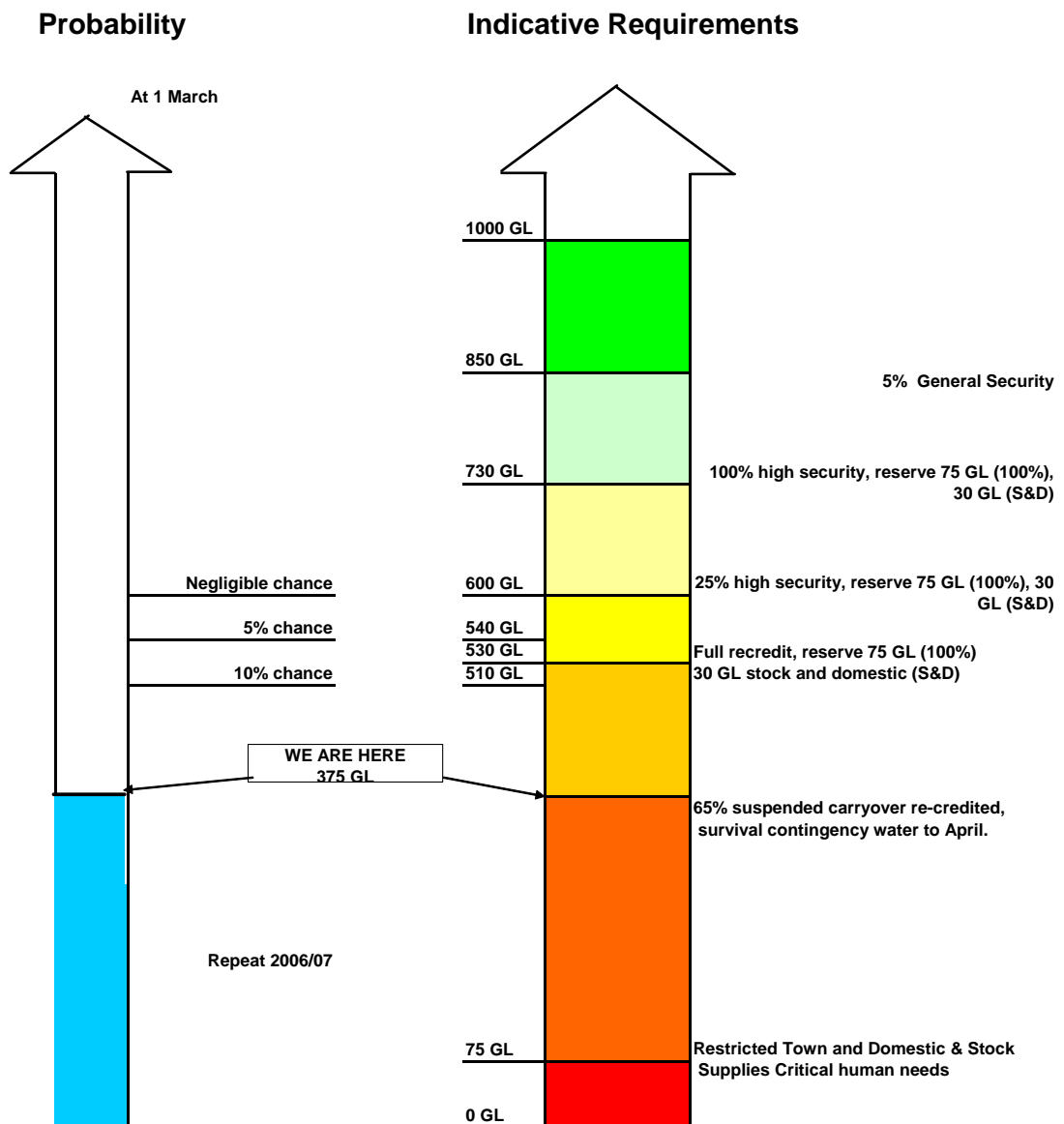
The drought contingency planning will only work if everyone adheres to the restrictions and is careful with **all** water use. To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any suspected breaches to the Department of Water and Energy's Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au.

Outlook for 2008/2009

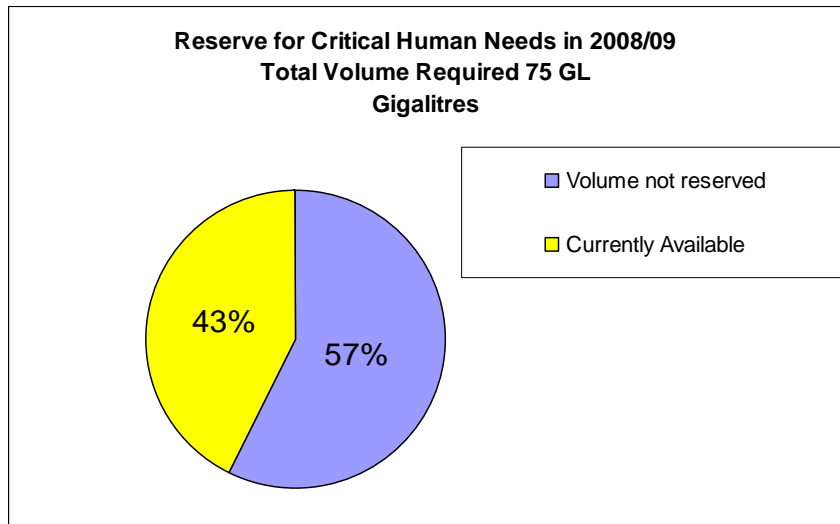
According the Bureau of Meteorology La Nina is now firmly established and has strengthened over the past month. It is expected to continue until autumn 2008.

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.



Water is now being reserved to meet the needs of critical town water and domestic supply for 2008/2009. 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 February 2008.

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