



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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Current water availability

There has been little to no rainfall in the last month in the Murray Valley, other than the small falls that have resulted from isolated storms. Many parts of the region have also experienced dust storms, an indication of how dry it has remained.

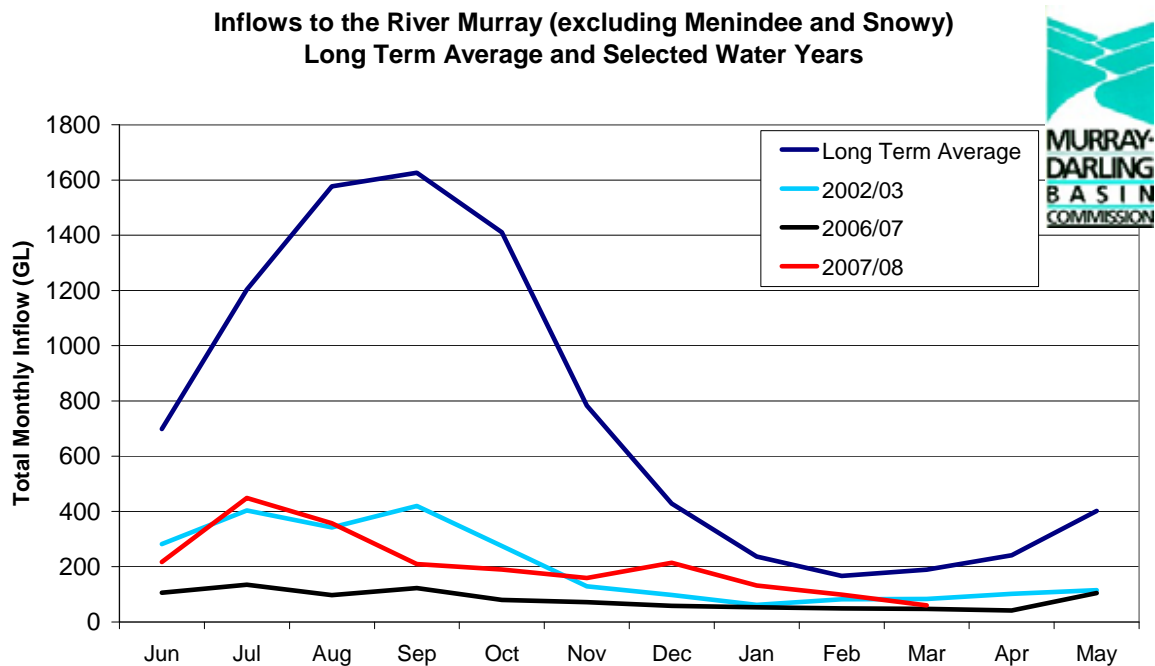
Storage levels as at 14 April 2008

Storage @ 14 April 2008	Volume GL	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 12 March 2008 to 14 April 2008 GL
Hume Dam	241	8	-129
Dartmouth Dam	677	17	-6
Lake Victoria	286	42	-63
Menindee Lakes Storage	584	34	+43
Total volume	1788		

This compares with storage levels at 16 April 2007

Storage @ 16 April 2007	Volume GL	Percent of Capacity
Hume Dam	111	4
Dartmouth Dam	466	10
Lake Victoria	218	32
Menindee Lakes Storage	90	5
Total volume	885	

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



Murray-Darling Basin Commission March 2008

What this means

Dry conditions have continued across the Murray Valley and inflows have reduced to the record low levels that were seen in 2006/07.

Water availability for 2008/09 remains seriously low and the Department will continue to work with the Senior Officers Group established by the Prime Minister and Premier in November 2006 to plan for securing all critical human needs in the southern Murray Darling Basin.

In the NSW Murray Valley sufficient water has already been reserved to meet basic human needs for 2008/09. Any further inflows will continue to be reserved to supply carryover, domestic and stock requirements and allocated to high security entitlements.

The delivery of water for stock and domestic purposes in effluents (creeks) and many irrigation channels remains a priority. However due to low water availability and high losses associated with providing water throughout these systems, the delivery of this water from Hume and Dartmouth dams cannot be met at present.

The drought water management strategy aims to reduce losses and evaporation and keep as much water as possible in the upper storages. Should substantial downstream tributary inflows occur, this water will be used to supply an earlier replenishment in the effluent creek systems.

It has been a priority to balance the water accounts of licence holders who participated in the critical water program. It now appears unlikely that all accounts will be balanced before the end of the 2007/08 water year. Unbalanced accounts will be carried over to 2008/09 with repayment of outstanding accounts for irrigation not commencing until high security allocations reach 50 per cent while for critical industry users repayment will commence at 80 per cent.

Carryover

Whilst the Murray Lower Darling Water Sharing Plan (WSP) remains suspended, all water in accounts will automatically be carried over into 2008/09, to a maximum of your licensed entitlement. This does not apply to local water utilities (town water) or stock and domestic licences which are not permitted any carryover.

This means that any water carried over greater than 100 per cent of entitlement will be forfeited.

Reinstating the water sharing plan

Licence holders should be aware that if there is significant rain over autumn and winter, then there is a chance that the WSP could be reinstated.

For this to occur there would need to be enough water available to NSW Murray valley users to ensure that;

- 97 per cent is available for high security licence holders
- Sufficient water is available to deliver all carryover and supply all stock and domestic water

If the WSP is reinstated before 1 July, then the normal carryover rules in the WSP will apply.

- For high security licences, this means that all carryover will be forfeited.
- For general security licences, this means that carryover will be limited to 50 per cent of their licensed entitlement.

Whether the WSP is suspended or not, a licence holder cannot have access to any more than 100 per cent of entitlement in any year, including allocation plus carryover unless they purchase additional water **in that year**.

If the WSP is reinstated after July 1 2008 then individual accounts will be allocated water up to the maximum of 100 per cent of entitlement.

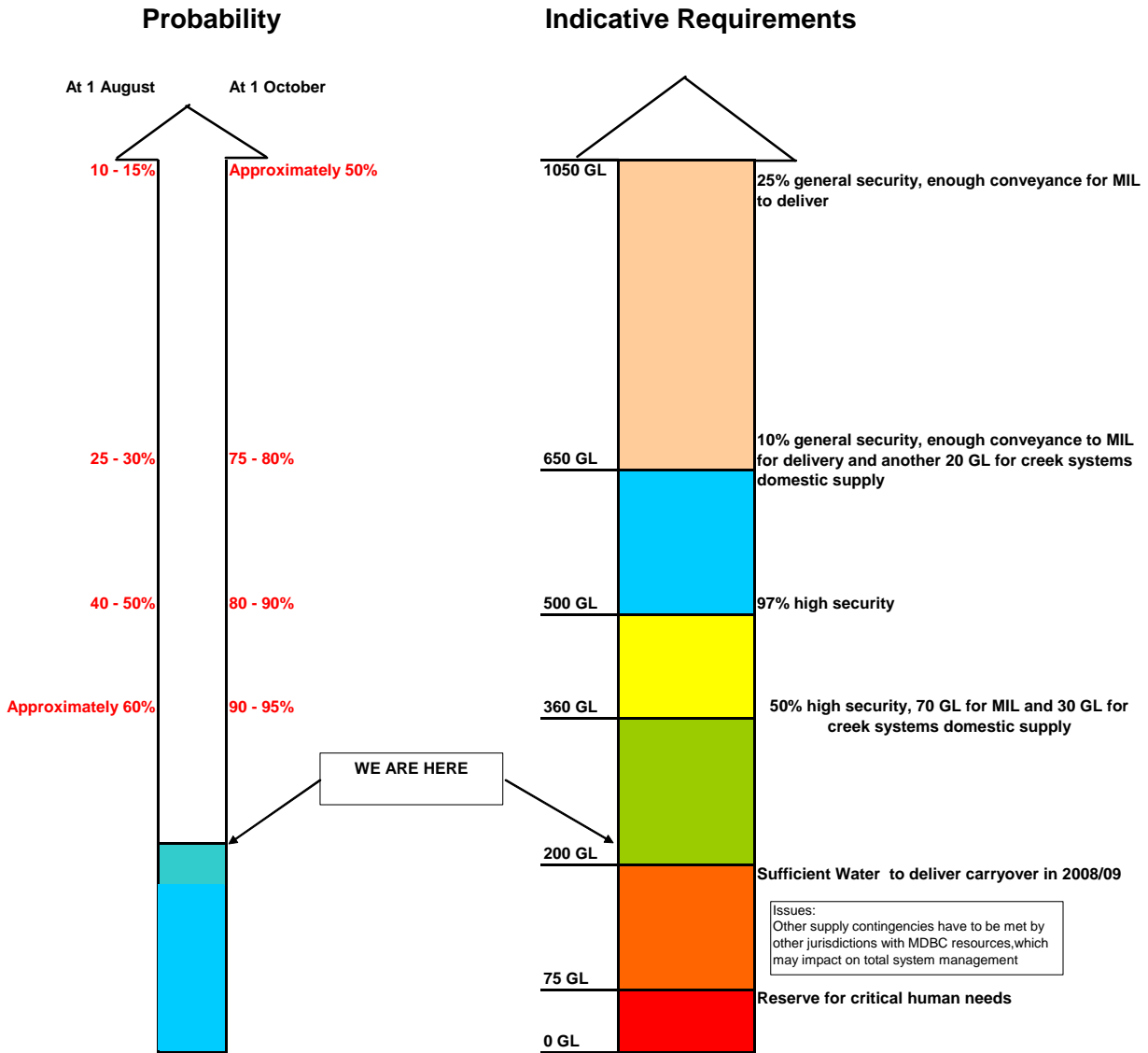
Trade

All water in accounts is tradeable. Close off of **all** trade applications in the Murray Valley, including inter-state and inter-valley trade, will be close of business on 30 April 2008. Applications can be made to trade water from upstream to downstream of the Barmah Choke while the water shortages exist. All other rules relating to trades within the Murray Lower Darling Water Sharing Plan area will remain.

Compliance

The water contingency planning program 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.

Water availability outlook



Please note: the volumes indicated above do not include individual carryover. These probabilities are indicative only and will change as the season progresses

Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900