



## Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

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### Current water availability

While there has been little rainfall across the western parts of the Murray Valley over the past two months, there has been some promising falls in the upper reaches during late July and early August. From 12 July to 13 August, Corryong received 82.8 millimetres (mm), Albury 61.6 mm, Deniliquin 32.4 mm and Mildura 28.8 mm. This is about equal to the long-term average for July.

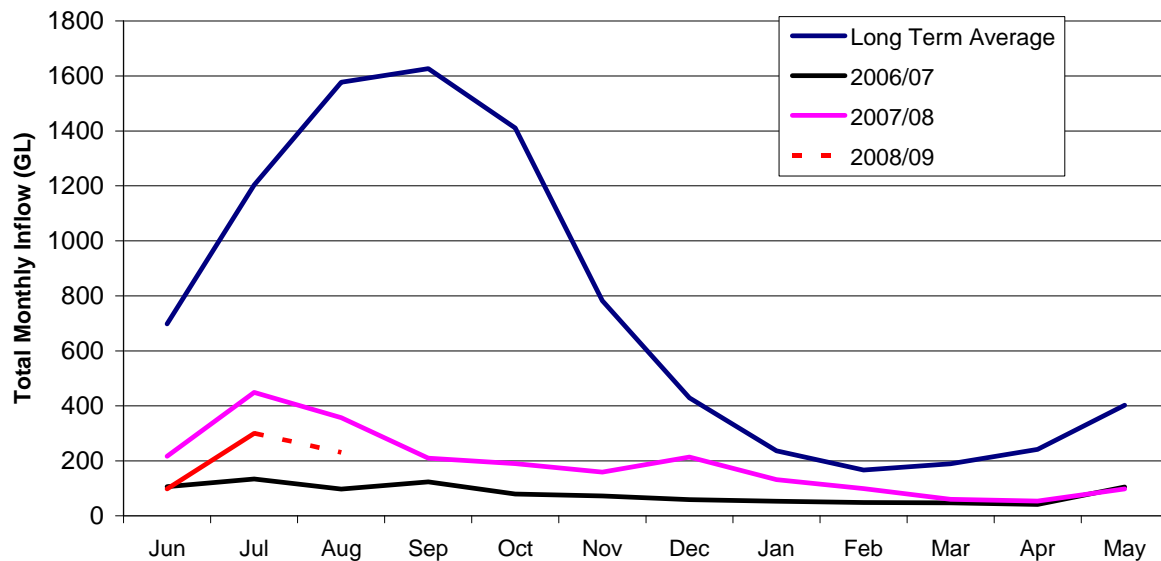
While conditions have improved slightly, overall the catchment remains dry. There has been some flow response to recent rains in June and July. Inflows into the Snowy River system storages have also improved slightly, and the good snow conditions are a promising sign of further improvement in the coming months.

Storage @ 13 August 2008	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 11 June 2008 to 13 August 2008 (GL)	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	715	24	+290	676 (22%)
Dartmouth Dam	747	17	+59	603 (16%)
Lake Victoria	307	45	+30	468 (69%)
Menindee Lakes Storage	524	30	-26	66 (4%)
<b>Total volume</b>	<b>2293</b>		<b>+353</b>	<b>1813</b>

While there is more water in storage now than at this time last year, much of this relates to an improved Menindee storage, of which, about 170 GL will flow into the Murray River. While 154 GL is held in individual accounts as carryover. There is also a significant volume of water stored in the Murrumbidgee and Goulburn River storages that was traded in 2007/08 that will be released into the Murray River as inter-valley transfer this year.

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### Inflows to the River Murray (excluding Menindee and Snowy) Long Term Average and Selected Water Years



This graph shows the long term average inflows into the Murray River. The 'red line' shows where we are currently in the 2008/09 water year.

While inflows are more than the record low levels of 2006, they are still less than at this time last year.

#### What this means

The significant improvement in water availability in the last two months has enabled an allocation of 25 per cent for 'high security' to be announced on 1 August. Water availability in the New South Wales Murray Valley is better now than at this time last year. There is approximately 150 GL of carryover in NSW Murray Valley licence accounts; 75 GL is available to provide critical human supplies throughout the year.

High priority is being given to reserving water to provide domestic and stock flows into the Colligen-Niemur, Wakool and Merran systems, as well as domestic and stock supplies for landholders within the Murray Irrigation Limited, West Corurgan, Moira and Eagle Creek water supply systems. Any additional water that becomes available will be shared between high security licence holders and domestic and stock supplies in the first instance.

At this stage, consideration has not been given to reserving water to meet critical human needs for 2009/10.

#### Account limits in 2008/09

All accounts will be limited to a maximum of 100 per cent of entitlement; including carryover and the announced available water determination (allocation). Water traded in during that water year is not subject to this limit.

For example, if a general security licensee carried over 50 per cent of entitlement, then the maximum available water determination (allocation) that will be available to this licence holder throughout 2008/09, will be 50 per cent plus water traded in.

## Repayment of critical water

There are still some licences with unreconciled accounts as a result of the critical water allocations made in 2007. Balancing (repayment) these outstanding accounts will commence when high security allocations reach 50 per cent. For critical industry users, repayment will commence at 80 per cent. This means that these licences will receive normal allocation credits until these allocation levels are reached.

## Management of the Menindee Lakes

There has been much interest in the management of the water currently held in the Menindee Lakes.

The highest priority for the management of the Menindee Lakes system is to reduce evaporative losses by storing water in the two upper lakes (Wetherell and Pamamaroo). This strategy will secure Broken Hill's water supply, enable delivery of high security and carryover in 2008/09, and to ensure there is water available to deliver the critical human and industry needs in the Murray Valley. This will also enable the diversion of some stock and domestic water into the tributary systems of the Murray in the coming months.

It is intended to release water from the Menindee Lakes into the Murray River in late spring/early summer 2008.

## Town water supply

Town water supply will remain at 50 per cent of entitlement. All town water supply authorities are asked to be as conservative as possible with water use.

## Trade

All water in accounts is tradable under the same rules that we applied in 2007/08. Currently all trades must be completed by the close of business on 30 April 2009. However, negotiations with other States are currently underway to align trade cut off dates between jurisdictions.

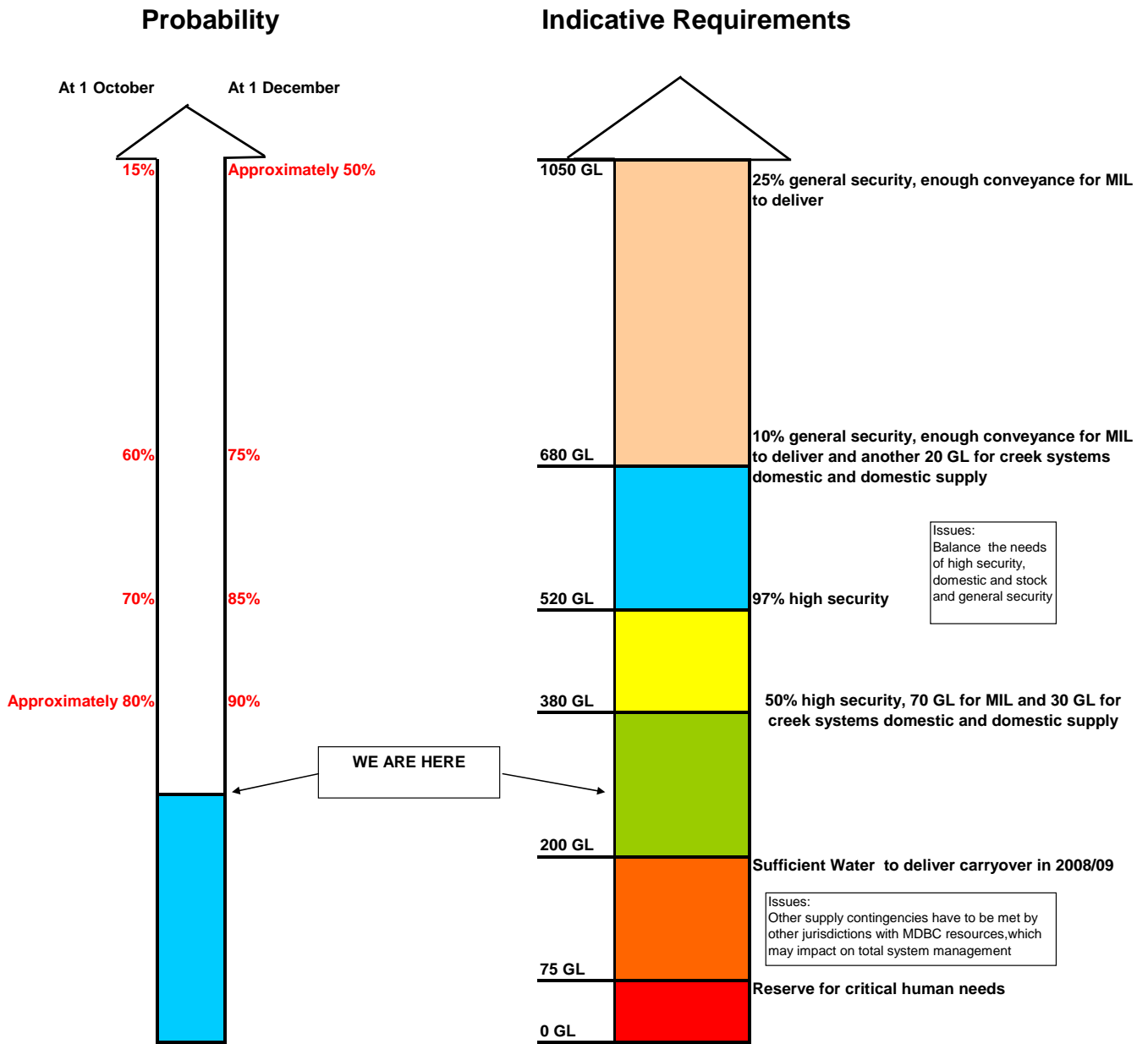
Trades out of the Lower Darling are permitted during 2008/09. Approved trades will be honoured under any circumstances. Trades will be permitted into the Lower Darling River, provided there is a nett trade out of the Darling River.

## Compliance

The Drought 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](mailto:watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au). All reports are confidential.

## Water availability outlook

### Murray Valley Outlook based on end of July assessment



Note: this advice only provides an indication of potential improvements and any planning decisions should also recognise the current conditions and meteorological predictions.

**Contact:** Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900