



Critical water planning for the Lower Darling

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Current water availability

Rainfall in the Darling Catchment over the past three months has been below average, with flows in the Barwon Darling now receding. The Darling River has stopped flowing downstream of Louth, with only minimal flows entering the system downstream from Mungindi.

Management of the Menindee Lakes

Water releases from the Menindee Lakes have been managed to provide a flow of approximately 50 megalitres per day (ML/day) past Burtundy to avoid any periods of no flow.

The Menindee Lakes storages will continue to be managed to secure Broken Hill's town water supply until Autumn 2010 and to enable the delivery of high security water allocations and carryover in the Lower Darling for 2008/09.

Water from the Lakes will also be released downstream into the Murray River system to supply domestic needs, high security and carryover in the Murray Valley. This is part of the inter-State water sharing arrangements agreed to by NSW.

NSW State Water commenced releases from Lake Pamamaroo on 14 September at a rate of 200 ML/day. It is expected that this will be increased to approximately 4,000 ML/day in early October.

The following table shows storage volumes in Lower Darling as 10 September, 2008.

Storage @ 10 September	Volume ML	Full surcharge volume ML	% capacity of normal full supply volume
Lake Wetherell	165,983	262,000	86
Lake Pamamaroo	338,492	345,000	125
Total Menindee Lakes Storage *	504,475		

Water rules

All water in accounts may be traded, except for stock and domestic and town water supply. The rule prohibiting trade from the Lower Darling has been lifted temporality due to the drought, meaning that water can be traded to the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys and interstate.

Groundwater bores maybe used under the same rules as applied in 2002/03; while general security allocations are under 100 per cent of entitlement, groundwater can be used to make up the shortfall.

Compliance issues

The Department of Water and Energy's drought management strategy can only work successfully if all users abide by the rules and only pump in accordance with their share, and the rules provided by either the Department or State Water.

To ensure that the system is run fairly, the community should report any possible breaches to the Department of Water and Energy's Compliance Unit in Buronga - Phone: 03 5051 6218 or Email: offence.report@dnr.nsw.gov.au. All reports will be treated confidentially.

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