



Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

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Current water availability

Promising rain has fallen across the catchment during late July and early August. From 12 July to the 13 August, Wagga Wagga has received 38.2 millimetres (mm), Gundagai 49.4 mm, Cooma 33.2 mm, Hay 16.2 mm and Griffith 18.4 mm of rain.

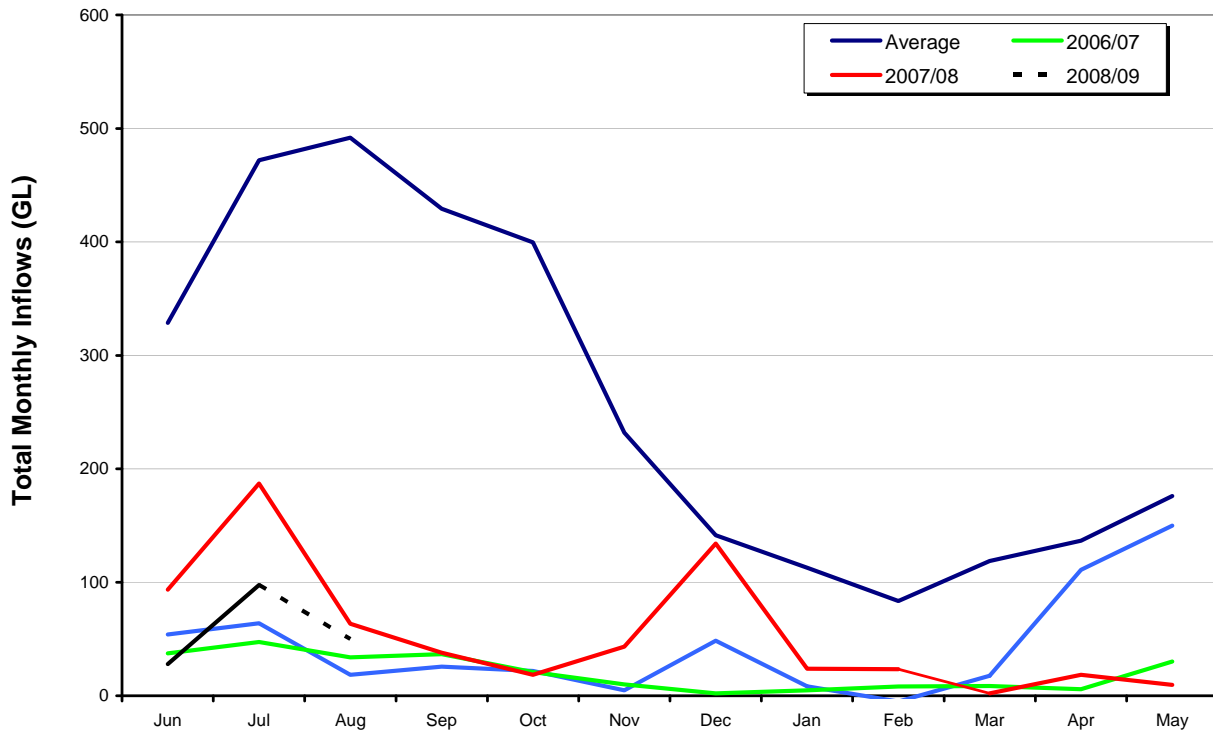
Run-off has started following the rainfalls and there has been some flow response in upstream creeks increasing water availability in the valley's dams. Inflows into the Snowy River system storages have also improved, and the good snow conditions are a promising sign of further improvement in the coming months.

The following table shows Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 13 August 2008.

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.
Burrinjuck Dam	456	44	+34	430 GL 41%
Blowering Dam	735	44	+182	475 GL 28%

While there is more water in storage now than at this time last year, much of this is held in individual accounts as carryover (254 GL), undelivered inter-valley transfers (about 76 GL) or is a pre-release of Snowy Hydro future commitments.

**Total Murrumbidgee Valley System Natural Inflows (excluding Snowy)
Selected Drought Years-v-Long term average**



This graph shows the long-term average system inflows comparing 2007/08 to recent drought years. The 'black line' indicates inflows so far this 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

An initial allocation for Murrumbidgee 'high security' users of 30 per cent announced on 1 August, was made possible because of increased inflows into the Snowy storages and small tributary inflows into Burrinjuck and Blowering Dams.

Subsequent inflows have allowed the allocation to be increased by a further 10 per cent from today, increasing the Available Water Determination (AWD) for high security licences to 40 per cent of entitlement.

There is now sufficient water available to:

- maintain continuous flows in all regulated schemes throughout the valley
- maintain the normal end-of-system flows at Balranald and in the Yanco Creek system.

Account limits in 2008/09

The Department of Water and Energy will continue to apply the provisions of the Water Sharing Plan in relation to the account limits wherever possible.

This means that:

- High security accounts will be limited to a maximum of 95 per cent of entitlement including carryover and the announced AWD (allocation), until the general security AWD (allocation) exceeds 95 per cent within the water year.
- General security accounts will be limited to a maximum of 100 per cent of entitlement including carryover and announced AWD (allocation).

For example, if a general security licensee carried over the maximum of 15 per cent of entitlement, then the AWD (allocation) that will be available to that licensee throughout 2008/09 will be 85 per cent of their entitlement.

New carryover rules for 2008/09

On 1 July 2008, Minister for Water, Nathan Rees, announced that Murrumbidgee **general security** licence holders would now be allowed to carryover up to 30 per cent of entitlement in all years. Carryover had previously been limited to 15 per cent.

High security licence holders will also be allowed to carryover up to 30 per cent of entitlement into 2009/10, while the Water Sharing Plan remains suspended.

Water trading

All water in accounts is tradable under the same rules that were 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.

The Water Sharing Plan rule that prohibits trading from high security licences after 1 September will remain suspended until the Water Sharing Plan is recommended.

Town water supply in 2008/09

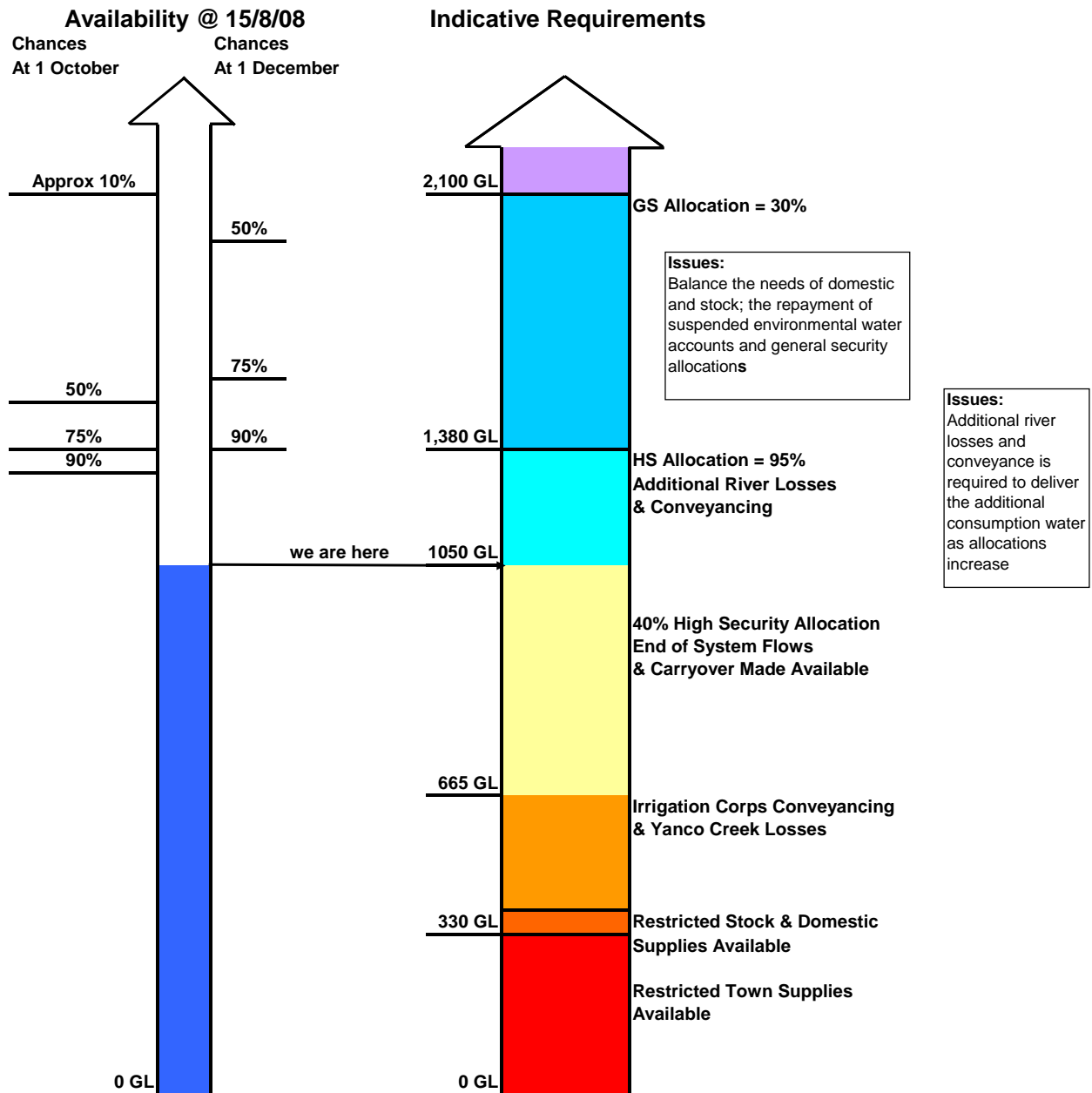
Because water availability remains very low, the allocation for town water supply remains on 50 per cent of entitlement. Town water supply authorities are asked to remain conservative with all water use.

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. All reports are confidential.

Water availability outlook

Murrumbidgee Valley Indicative Outlook



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

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