



Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

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Current water availability

Rainfall across the Valley for the past month was below average, with some patchy falls occurring in the upper catchment. These falls have not generated significant inflows, but with average snow conditions there are reasonable prospects that snow melt will provide useful inflows later in the season.

The highest rainfall for the month was recorded at Thredbo Top Station, receiving 120 millimetres (mm), while Balranald in the west of the catchment received the lowest rainfall of 4.8 mm.

The following table shows Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 11 September 2008.

Storage @ 11 September 2008	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 13 August to 11 September 2008 (GL)	Volume at this time last year.
Burrinjuck Dam	473	46	+17	423
Blowering Dam	810	48	+75	482
Total	1283		+92	905

What this means

While there is more water in the Valley's storages now than at this time last year, much of this water 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.

The majority of the increased volume in Blowering Dam is the result of a pre-release of 2009/10 water from Snowy Hydro storages that is not available for use this year.

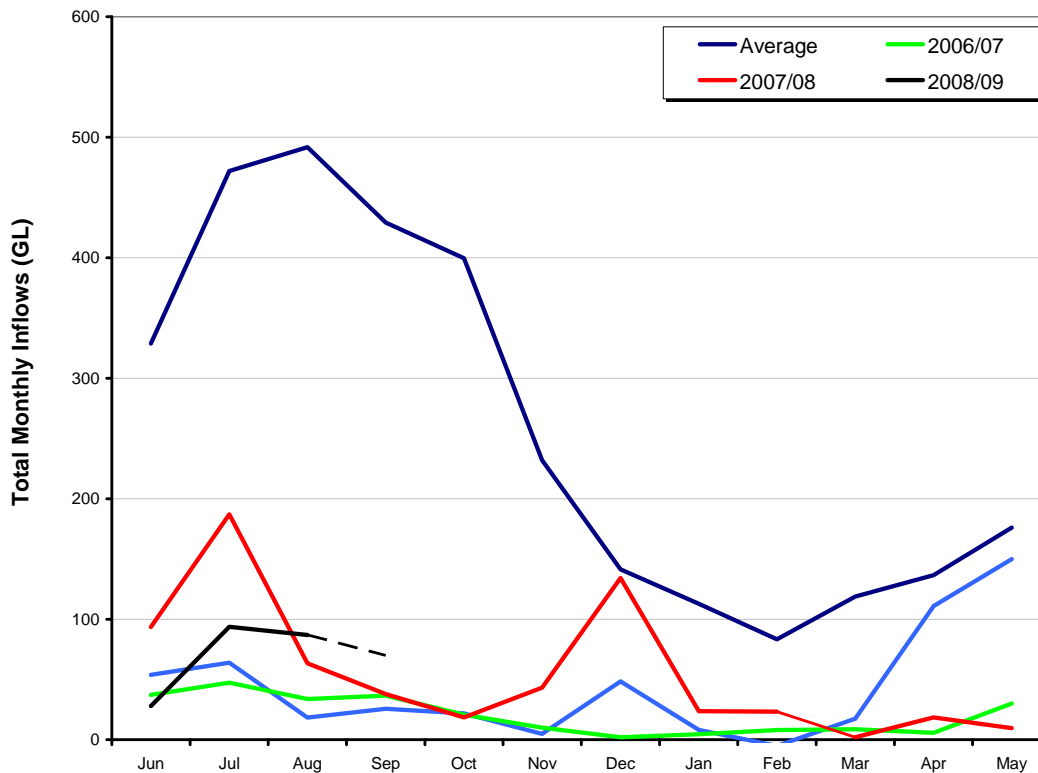
There has been a small increase in water availability in the Murrumbidgee Valley from minor inflows, particularly in the Tumut Valley, which has enabled **high security allocations to be increased by 15 per cent, to 75 per cent of entitlement**. There is also access to up to 15 per cent carryover from last year.

This compares with a high security allocation in September 2007 of 60 per cent of entitlement.

At this stage there is not enough water in Murrumbidgee storages to announce a general security allocation or to increase the existing 50 per cent allocation for town water supply.

Consideration will need to be given to reserving water for 2009/10 in October.

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.

Account management

The Department of Water and Energy in conjunction with the Murrumbidgee Critical Water Advisory Group will continue to apply the provisions of the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan in relation to water account limits wherever possible.

This means that:

- Water will be allocated to high security licences until 95 per cent is made available,
- The supply of stock and domestic water will be closely monitored and delivery will be adjusted to provide adequate drought supply throughout the season,
- High security accounts will be limited to a maximum of 95 percent of entitlement including carryover and the announced AWD (allocation)*, until the general security AWD exceeds 95 per cent within the water year,
- As water supply improves, general security allocations will only be made if the associated conveyance water is also available,
- General security accounts will be limited to a maximum of 100 per cent of entitlement including carryover and the announced AWD.

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

Water trading

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

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

Town water supply in 2008/09

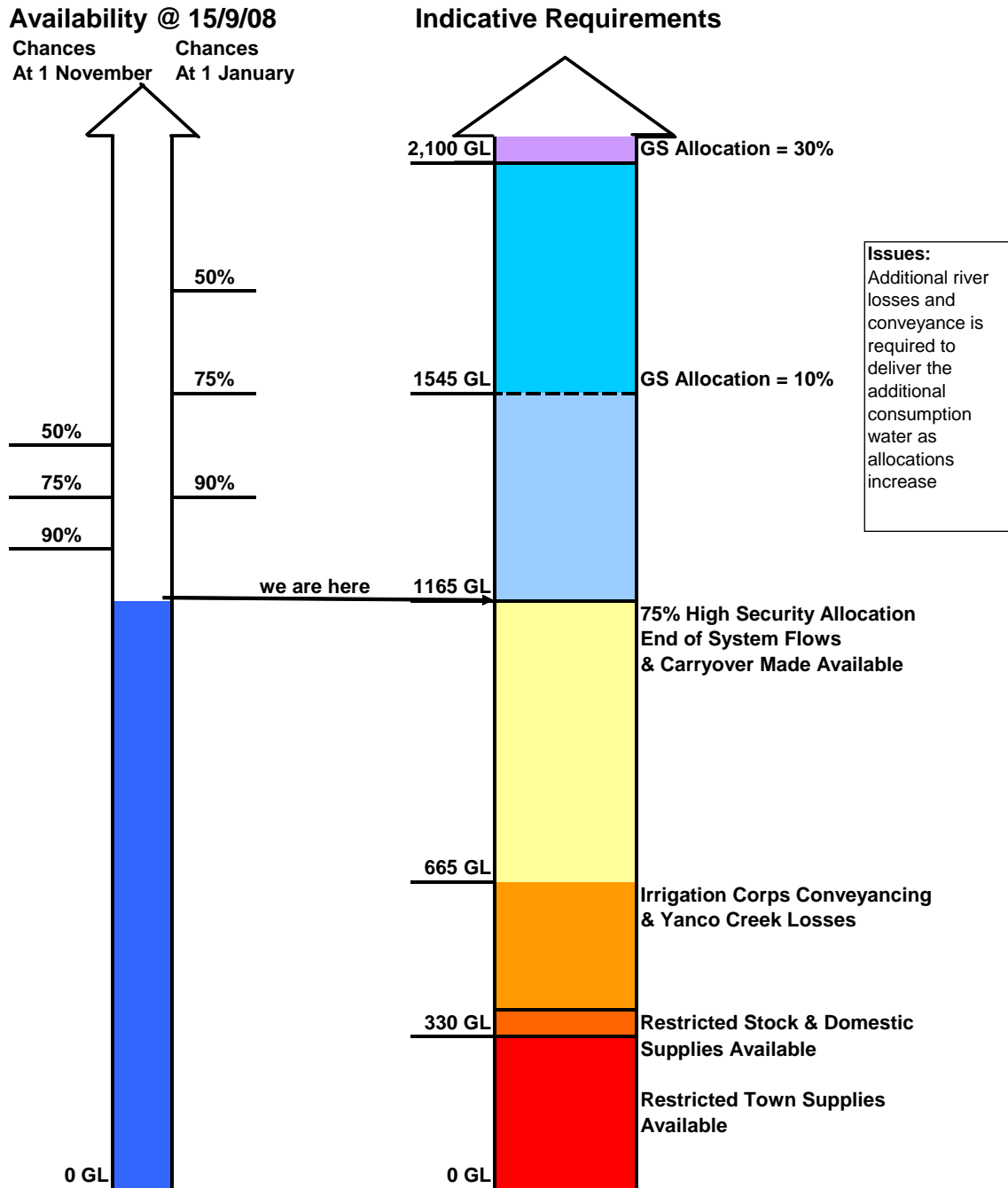
Because water availability remains very low, the allocation for town water supply remains on 50 per cent of entitlement. Town water supply authorities are asked to remain conservative with all water use.

Compliance

The Department's 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 via phone 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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