



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

Critical water planning for the Murrumbidgee Valley

Issue 20 | 15 January 2009

Current water availability

Significant rain fell across the Valley in mid December but there has been little rainfall since. Thredbo received 140 millimetres (mm) prior to Christmas and 201.9 mm since December 1, likewise Gundagai received 49.8 mm and 54.2 mm, Griffith 38.4 mm and 41.4 mm and Hay received 42.2 mm and 43.6 mm respectively.

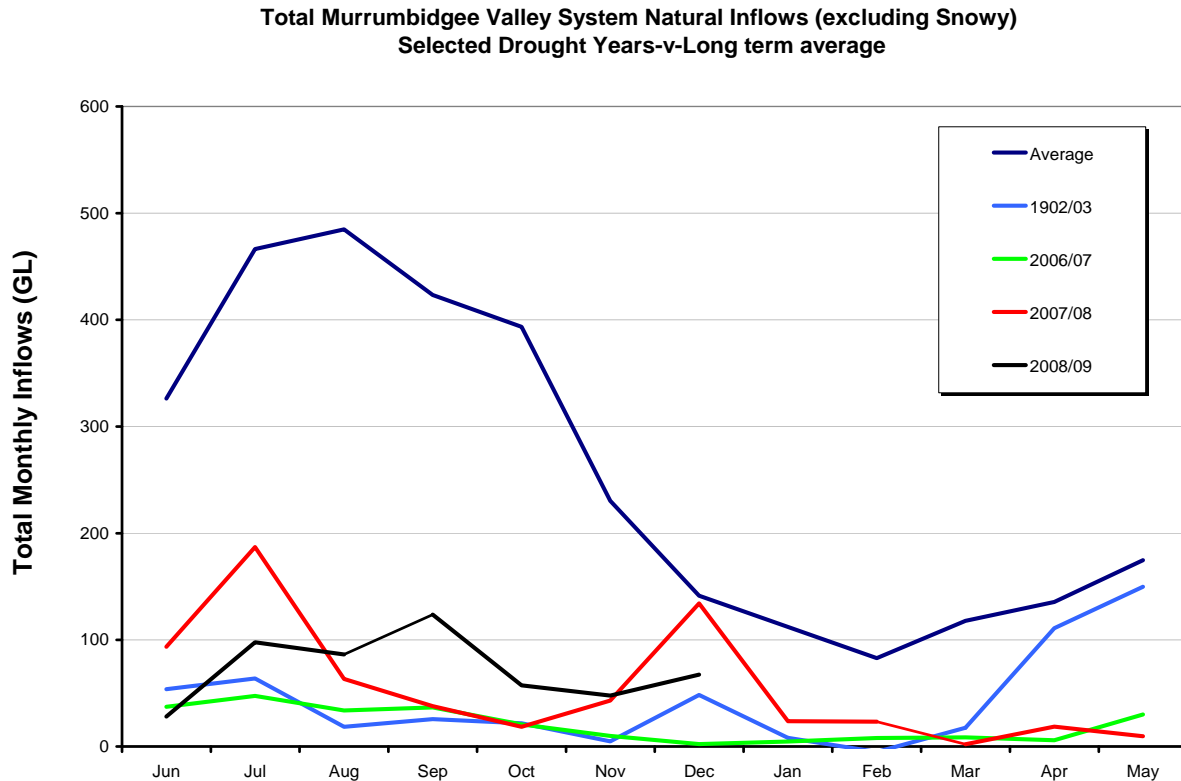
The season has been relatively mild, with river losses being much less than expected. This combined with the rainfall has resulted in reasonable inflows into the Snowy and Murrumbidgee storages enabling a significant increase in general security allocations.

Usage this year has been lower than expected and combined with the improved storages has enabled the lifting of the restriction on the pre-February delivery of allocations, ie all water in accounts can be accessed immediately.

The following table shows Murrumbidgee Valley storage levels as at 12 January 2009.

Storage @ 12 January 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 1 December to 12 January 2009 (GL)	Volume at this time last year.
Burrinjuck Dam	522	51	+19	428
Blowering Dam	574	34	-83	461
Total	1096			889

Murrumbidgee system monthly inflows



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.

Inflows into the Murrumbidgee Valley's storages are better now than at the same time last year; however, resources are still very much below average.

What this means

There is enough water available to increase general security water allocations to 21 percent of entitlement. All water in accounts can be taken immediately.

Water to meet critical human needs for 2009/10 has been secured and town water supply authorities and councils are now responsible for managing their water supply within their entitlements.

With general security allocations now past 20 per cent of entitlement, in accordance with previous agreements, water borrowed from the environmental water accounts in 2006 /07 is now being repaid.

The environmental account will be repaid at a rate of 50 per cent of improvements, until cleared.

Currently the environmental accounts in the Murrumbidgee are owed approximately 100 GL (gigalitres) of water. 25 GL has been credited to the Murrumbidgee (EWA) Environmental Water Allowance.

As outlined in previous statements, the Department is now working with users to reinstate normal water sharing plan rules, including conveyance requirements to the major irrigation corporations in the valley.

Probabilities for initial July 2009 allocations will be published in the next communiqué, and refined each month as the water year comes to close.

Carryover rules

While the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan remains, suspended, High and General security licences will be permitted to carryover a maximum of 30 per cent of entitlement. Should the Water Sharing Plan be recommenced, then the rules in the plan will apply.

All allocations in 2009/10 will be limited - meaning that the sum of carryover plus allocations **cannot** exceed 100 per cent.

Trade

All water in accounts is tradeable.

All intra-valley trades must be received by Statewater by close of business on May 31 2009. Close off dates for interstate trades will be notified at a later date following further discussion with the other states

Town water supply in 2008/09

Town Water Supply remains on 95 per cent of entitlement. Now that water to meet critical human needs for 2009/10 has been secured, town water supply authorities are responsible to managing water restrictions within their entitlement.

Water supply authorities are asked to remain as conservative as possible with all water use.

Compliance

The Department of Water and Energy'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's Compliance Unit via phone 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900