



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

Issue 19 | 17 November 2008

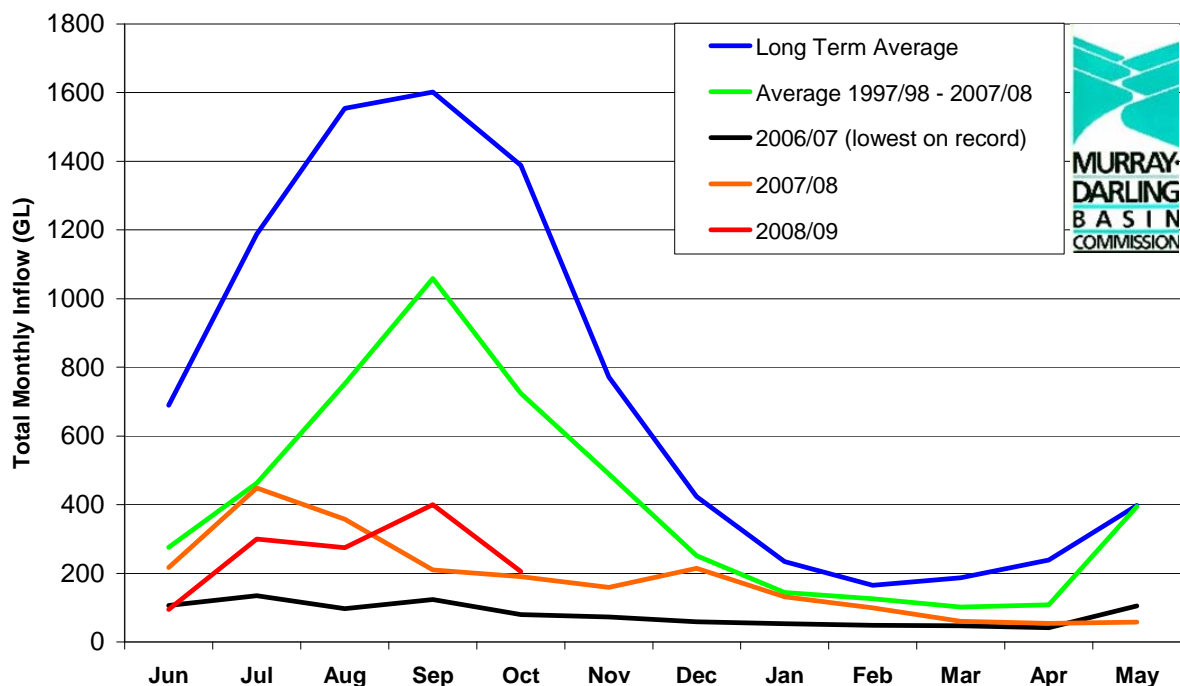
Current water availability

From 10 October to 12 November 2008, rainfall across the Murray Valley has mostly fallen in the upper parts of the catchment. Mount Hotham received 94.2 millimetres (mm), Albury 47.6 mm, Deniliquin 21.6 mm and Mildura 27.4 mm of rain in that period.

While the recent rain was most welcome, it has generated little inflow and has not improved water availability.

Storage @ 12 November 2008	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 13 October to 12 November 2008 (GL)	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	972	32	-95	806
Dartmouth Dam	872	21	+16	716
Lake Victoria	257	38	-8	432
Menindee Lakes Storage	297	17	-133	38
Total volume	2398			1992

This graph shows the long-term average inflows into the Murray River. The 'red line' indicates our current position in the 2008/09.



While inflows are similar to the rates at this time last year, they remain extremely low in statistical terms. Inflows since 1 June this year could be expected to be exceeded in about 95 years in every 100.

What this means

There has not been sufficient improvement in water availability in NSW to increase allocations.

High security, Town Water Supply and Stock and Domestic remain on 95 per cent of entitlement and General security licence holders remain on 2 per cent of entitlement.

All carryover water is available.

The Stock and Domestic replenishment to the Wakool, Merran and Colligen Niemur systems is now complete - licence holders reminded that this water **cannot** be taken for irrigation.

The priority for allocation of any improvement of water availability is to;

- meet critical human needs for 2009/10
- increase general security allocations in this year
- water to provide a second stock and domestic flush to the mid-Murray tributaries

While the situation will be monitored constantly, this is the last critical water planning communiqué for 2008.

Management of the Menindee Lakes

Water releases are continuing from the Menindee Lakes at a rate of 3,200 ML/d to transfer approximately 170 GL to the Murray Valley to supplement the water available to NSW. Inflows to the Menindee Lakes have ceased - likewise the Darling River has not flowed at Wilcannia since late July 2008.

Euston Lakes

As part of the drought management strategy, a number of wetlands in the Murray Valley in South Australia and NSW, including the Euston Lakes, have been disconnected from the main stem of the Murray River to reduce evaporation losses and conserve water.

It had been agreed that when operating under normal water sharing arrangements the trigger to refill those wetlands is when High security allocations reach 97 per cent of entitlement.

While High security is currently at 95 per cent of allocation, this is only because of changed inter-state water sharing arrangements. In normal circumstance, the High security allocation would still be less than 70 per cent. Consequently, the Department does not believe that the trigger level to refill those wetlands has been reached.

Further; environmental assessment of the lakes has shown that there is no immediate threat of critical environmental damage from the lakes remaining dry during the coming summer.

The Department will be continuing to review the situation and will be recommending to the Senior Officers Group on contingency planning (comprising NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Commonwealth Governments) that these wetlands not be refilled in 2008.

Town water supply

Town Water allocations are at 95 per cent of entitlement and may now move to Level 2a water restrictions - that allow 8 hours of outside watering including lawn watering.

Councils will provide further information on the water restrictions.

To provide consistency in the application of town water restrictions, it has been agreed that from now onwards the level of town water restrictions will be tied to high security allocations as follows:

Murray Valley Town Water Restrictions Policy

Town water restriction triggers points:

High security water allocation (as a percentage of the licensed entitlement)	Level of town water restrictions
Less than and up to 20 per cent	Level 4 – no outside watering
Greater than 20 per cent and up to 40 per cent	Level 3a – maximum of four hours watering per week
Greater than 40 per cent and up to 60 per cent	Level 3 – maximum of eight hours watering per week
Greater than 60 per cent and up to 80 per cent	Level 2a – maximum of eight hours watering per week, including restricted lawn watering
Greater than 80 per cent and all water for critical human needs for the next water year has been reserved	To be determined by council

In addition to the trigger points, the following rules will apply:

- Councils may purchase water on the temporary market to allow town water restrictions to be eased from Level 4 up to Level 3 restrictions. However, this does not apply to groundwater in towns where water is being diverted from emergency bores that have been funded by the NSW Government to provide for critical human needs.
- Provided the available town water supply allocation is not exceeded, it will be up to Council to decide whether they will water parks, school grounds and sports fields during periods of restrictions.
- Private diverters and domestic bore owners will be required to observe the same restrictions as their local council area.
- Town water supplies from aquifers are subject to same restrictions as surface water.

Carryover rules

If the Water Sharing Plan remains suspended, High and General security licences will be permitted to carryover unused allocation up to a maximum of 100 per cent of entitlements. If the Water Sharing Plan is recommenced, then High security licences will **not** be permitted to carryover, as there will be sufficient water to provide full High security allocations in 2009/10. All use in 2009/10 will be limited so that the sum of carryover and allocations cannot exceed 100 per cent.

Trade

All water in accounts is tradable under the same rules applied in 2007/08. Currently all trades must be completed by the close of business on **30 April 2009**. Town water supply **cannot** be traded while the Water Sharing Plan remains suspended

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 on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

Water availability outlook

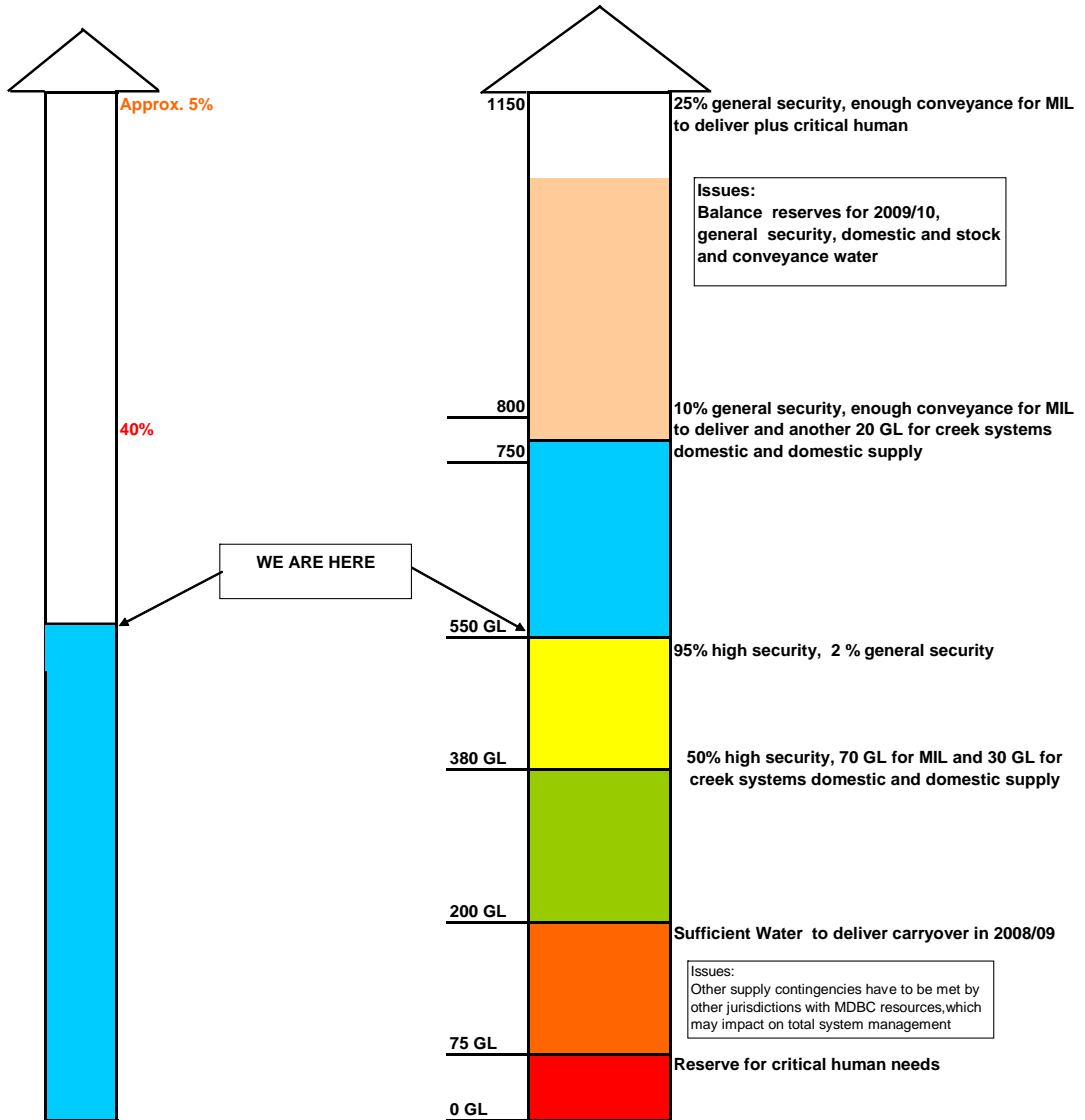
NSW Murray Valley Outlook

Based on end of September Assessment

Probability

At 1 February

Indicative Requirements



NOTE: The volumes required to deliver allocations have changed because of the need to reserve water for critical human needs in 2009/10, and the need to increase the conveyance allowance for MIL

Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900