



NSW Government

Department of Water & Energy

Critical water planning for the Murray Valley

Issue 21 | 16 February 2009

Current water availability

From 12 January to 12 February 2009 rainfall across the Murray Valley was insignificant and all streamflows remain very low and are still reducing.

Temperatures during this period have been extreme, with most centres in the Valley experiencing temperatures well above the average for that time of year.

The average maximum January temperature in Mildura was 35.3 degrees, compared to the long-term average of 32.7 degrees, with twelve days straight of temperatures above 40 degrees. Likewise, Deniliquin and Albury have experienced temperatures well above their long-term averages, with both centres experiencing near record periods of 40 degree days.

The recent heatwave has resulted in higher river transmission losses and increased evaporation that have off-set any increases from the Snowy Scheme.

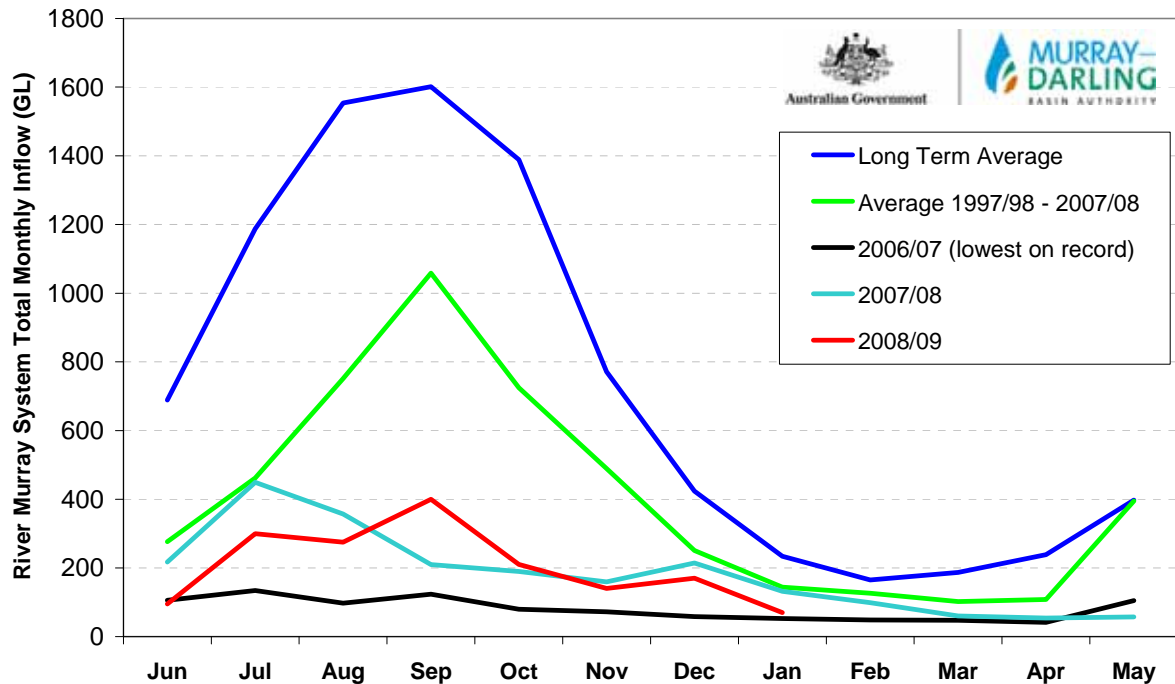
Rainfall over the period has been low, with Thredbo receiving 78.5 millimetres (mm) Albury 8.4 mm, Deniliquin 0.4 mm and Mildura 0.8 mm respectively.

The following table shows Murray Valley storage levels as at 12 February 2009.

Storage @ 12 February 2009	Volume (GL)	Percent of capacity	Change in Volume 12 January 2009 (GL)	Volume at this time last year
Hume Dam	487	16	-180	486
Dartmouth Dam	878	22	-6	684
Menindee Lakes Storage	108	6	-26	353
Total volume	1473			1523

Inflow graph

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



Inflows during December and January have fallen to well below the rates at the same time last year and are now approaching the record low flows of 2006/07.

What this means

Currently there is only enough water reserved to meet critical human needs in 2009/10. If these low flows continue, there is insufficient water in storage to meet conveyance requirements in 2009/10.

Without a substantial autumn break, water users should be aware that not all carryover will be available at 1 July 2009 and if this eventuates, contingency measures will need to be implemented. While the probabilities of this occurring are low, water users should factor this possibility into their forward planning.

Any improvements in water availability now will need to be reserved to provide water for stock and domestic and high security needs, and to meet conveyance water for 2009/10 that will enable water for critical human needs and carryover to be delivered.

General security allocations will remain at nine per cent of entitlement in the Murray Valley and all other allocations remain unchanged.

Mid Murray tributaries

The planned stock and domestic water release into the Wakool River system has been postponed until conditions improve. The decision comes following fish kills in both the Colligen and Merran Creeks.

The Department remains committed to providing a stock and domestic replenishment flow in 2009 and understands that landholders in these systems are desperate for stock and domestic water. However, flows will not be made until the potential for further fish kills is reduced.

The fish kills in both creeks are the result of severely reduced oxygen levels in the water at the head of the flow, caused by high water temperatures coupled with high organic loads. In some localised areas this have been exacerbated by the impact of acid-sulphate sediments.

These conditions are not expected to change as a consequence of the lower temperatures, over a short period of time. The Department will continue to monitor the conditions and will continue releases when conditions allow.

Landholders who are desperate for critical stock and household needs are advised to contact the Department of Primary Industries drought support workers. Drought support workers are available in Corowa (02 6033 4245) and Hay (02 6993 1608).

Upper Murray Unregulated steams and creeks

The upper catchment is also extremely dry with a number of unregulated streams and creeks that have reached Cease to pump levels (CTP)

Cease to pump has been reached already in the following:

Tumbarumba Subcatchment

- Tumbarumba Creek, Pound Creek, Burra Creek, Boggy Creek and Paddys River.

Maragle Subcatchment

- Maragle Creek; Maragle Back Creek; Reedy Creek and Sawpit Creek.

Mannus Subcatchment:

- Mannus Creek, Boggy Creek; Mundaroo Creek; Mundaroo Back Creek and unnamed tributaries of these creek systems.

Jingellic Subcatchment

- Jingellic Creek; Coppabella Creek and Lankeys Creek.

Flows are low and may soon reach levels where rostering of diversions will commence or cease to pump levels reached in the Indi and Tooma Rivers.

Licence holders in these areas are reminded to check and adhere to the conditions on their license.

Management of the Menindee Lakes

The total volume in the Menindee Lakes storage has reduced to 108 gigalitres (GL) and without substantial inflows in the near future; drought contingency measures will be implemented in autumn. While the Darling catchment is in a relatively dry state, there are still prospects of late summer early autumn rains in the northern parts of the Basin.

Town water supply

Town water allocations remain at 95 per cent of entitlement and water to meet critical human needs for 2009/10 has been reserved. Councils and Town water supply authorities are now responsible for managing water restrictions within their licensed entitlement.

The drought is far from over and **everyone** should remain conservative with all water use. Without significant improvement in water availability, water supply will be severely reduced in 2009/10 and town water supply authorities should be prepared to commence the new water year at level 4 water restrictions (no outside water use).

Carryover rules

While the Murray Valley Water Sharing Plan remains suspended, high and general security licences will be permitted to carryover unused water allocations up to a maximum of 100 per cent of entitlement. 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. High security licence holders should be aware that when the 2009/10 allocation improves, they will be limited to 100 per cent of entitlement, including carryover plus allocation.

Trade

All water in accounts is tradable under the same rules applied in 2007/08.

All water in accounts is tradeable. All trades must be received by State Water by close of business 31 May 2009

- **Stock and domestic water is not tradeable.**
- **There are restrictions on the trade of town water supply.**

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

The following table shows the indicative probabilities as of 13 February 2009.

Date	Critical Human needs	Delivery of Carryover	* Stock and domestic	# 50% high security allocation
1 July	90%	25%	15%	10%
1 August	95%	75%	50%	30%
1 September	99%	90%	75%	60%

* Stock and domestic:

This is stock and domestic water supplied to effluent streams and smaller irrigation companies and includes survival water for permanent plantings.

This estimate includes additional MIL conveyance and high security.

Contact: Bunty Driver 03 5898 3900