



Critical water planning for the Murray Valley and Lower Darling

Issue 33 | 15 March 2010

Current water availability

The floods in the Darling River as a result of the December/January rainfall in northern NSW have made their way to the Menindee Lakes and releases from this event have now reached the Murray River.

These flows and the residual Murray River flows have met the South Australian entitlement and filled the New South Wales share of Lake Victoria. Additional inflows into Lake Victoria will contribute to Victoria's available water resources under the internal spill rules of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

Rainfall summary

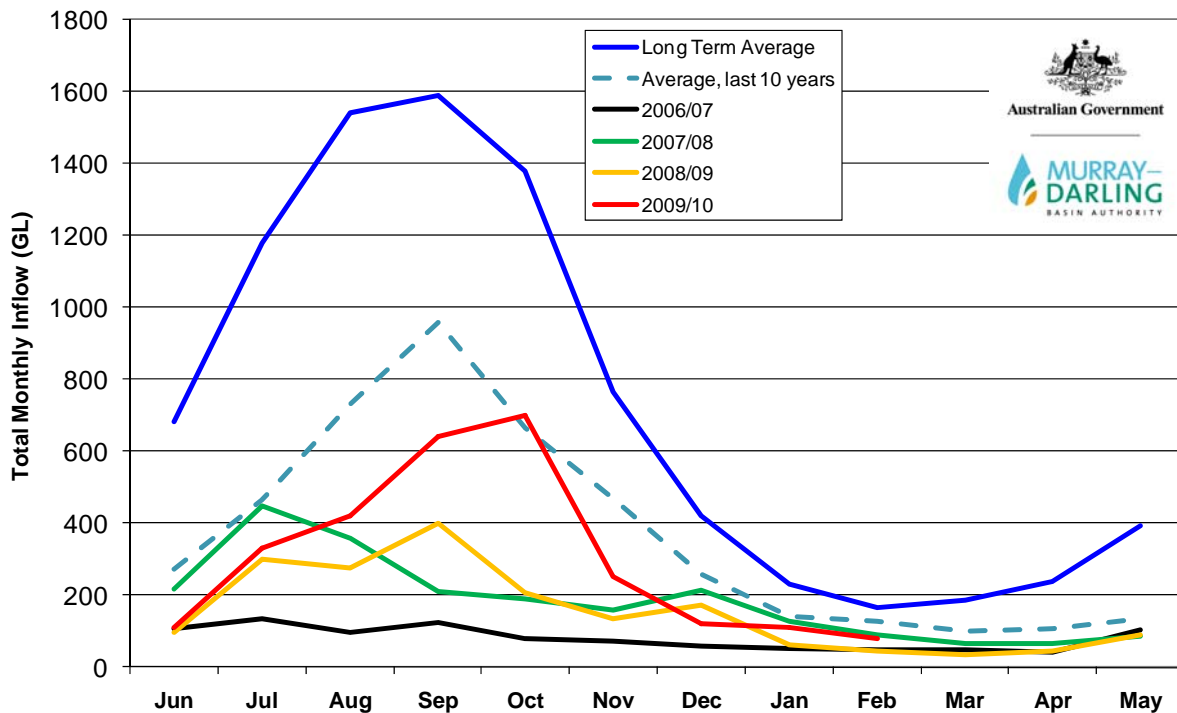
The recent heavy rainfall across the Riverina has mostly fallen west of the ranges and will not generate significant flows into Hume and Dartmouth Dams. As a result there has been no significant increase in the water available to New South Wales since the beginning of March 2010.

| Location | From 12 - 28 February (mm) | From 1 - 11 March (mm) | Total (mm) | Long term Feb average (mm) | % of March average |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Thredbo Village | 162.7 | 109.1 | 271.8 | 103.2 | 263 |
| Albury | 6.2 | 98.6 | 104.8 | 37.9 | 277 |
| Deniliquin | 23.8 | 130.6 | 154.4 | 31.1 | 496 |
| Mildura (airport) | 10.2 | 21.6 | 31.8 | 18.0 | 177 |

The following table shows Murray Valley storage levels as at 11 March 2010.

| Storage @ 11 March 2010 | Volume (GL) | Percent of capacity | Change (GL) in Volume since 11 February 2010 | Approximate volume at this time last year |
|-------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--|---|
| Hume Dam | 538 | 18 | -27 | 252 |
| Dartmouth Dam | 1204 | 31 | +15 | 858 |
| Menindee Lakes | 590 | 34 | +120 | 161 |
| Lake Victoria | 481 | 72 | +164 | 226 |
| Total volume | 2813 | | | 1352 |

Inflow graph



Inflows into the River Murray this year are similar to the low drought inflows of the last three years, and are still well below the long term average. This excludes the inflows into the Menindee Lakes.

What this means

There is sufficient water to increase general security allocations in the Murray Valley by 2 per cent to 22 per cent of entitlement. Water has been reserved to meet the critical human needs for the NSW Murray Valley for 2010/11 and to maintain flows in the Wakool River system. The current flooding from central Queensland will flow into the Darling River and ensure sufficient water for the delivery of critical human needs, carryover and high security in 2010/11 for the lower Darling River. These flows will also contribute to water availability in the Murray Valley.

Management of the Menindee Lakes

The flows generated in the Barwon Darling River system as a result of the Christmas New Year flooding in northern New South Wales has resulted in about 1,070,000 megalitres of water passing Wilcannia. This water has resulted in Lakes Wetherell and Pamamaroo being filled to their surcharge capacity of about 610 gegalitres, with about 580 gegalitres being released to the lower Darling.

It is expected that at least 500 gegalitres of water will reach the Murray River from this event. The inflows are now receding and the releases from the Menindee Lakes are now being reduced in anticipation of volumes that will enter the Darling River and eventually the Menindee Lakes from current Queensland flooding.

While it is too early to estimate the total volumes that will pass into the Barwon Darling River, the early assessment is that there will clearly be enough to justify directing water into Lake Menindee. In the coming days, water will commence flowing from Lake Pamamaroo into Lake Menindee for the first time since 2002.

Trade

A third ballot to enable 60 gigalitres or 60,000 megalitres of water to be traded out of the Murrumbidgee Valley closed on Monday, 8 March 2010.

The ballot was over subscribed by 16,500 megalitres. The full 60,000 megalitres was allocated.

NSW will cease trading on 1 May 2010.

Carryover

All water in accounts up to the limit of entitlement can be carried over into the next water year. In 2010/11 announced allocations plus carryover will be limited to 100 per cent of entitlement.

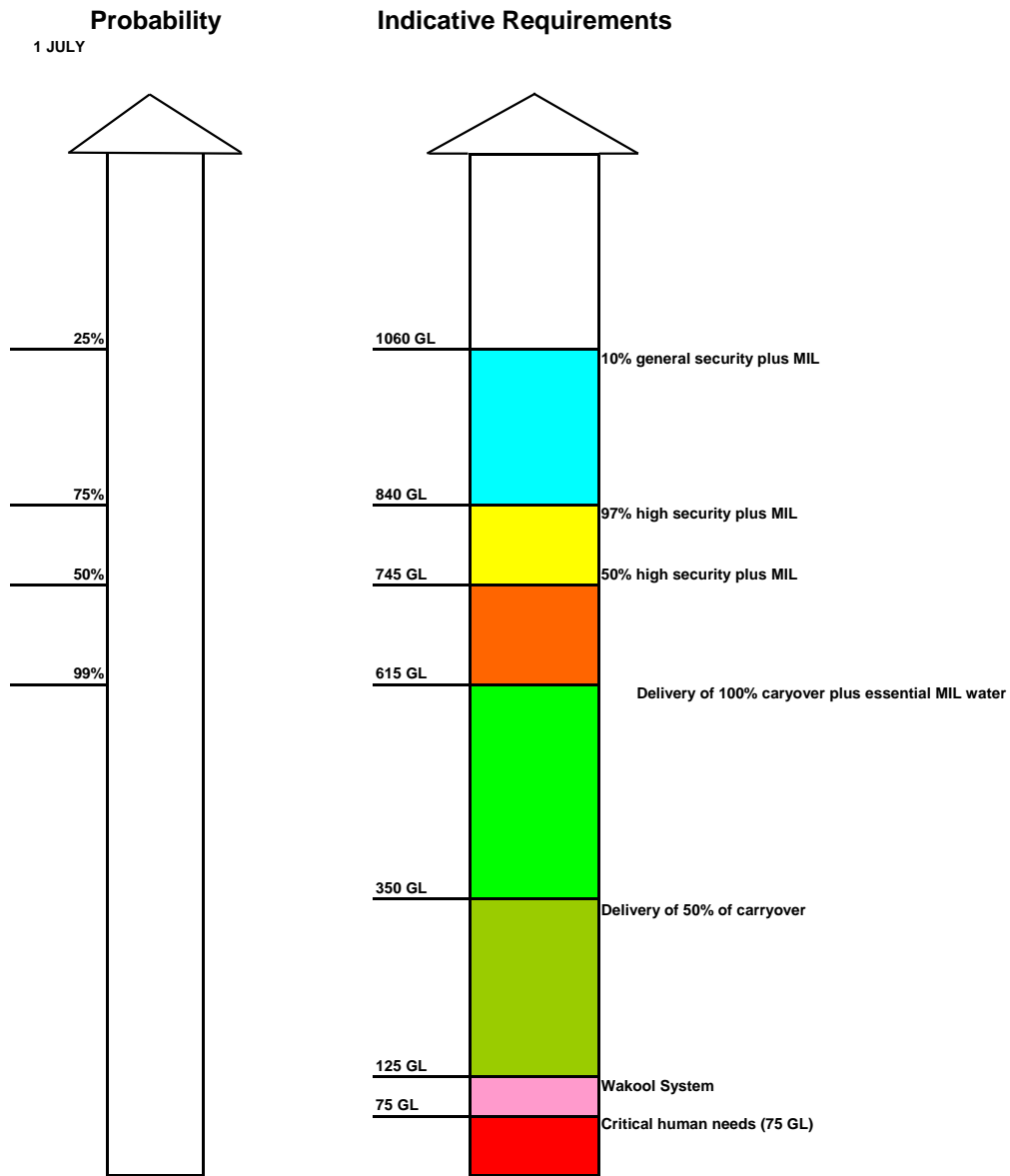
Based on current allocations and projected usage, it is expected that about 450 gigalitres will be carried over into 2010/11. However this initial estimate should be regarded as indicative only.

Compliance

Despite the good flows in the Darling River, water availability in the NSW Murray Valley remains extremely low.

The NSW Office of Water'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 Office's Compliance Unit on 1800 633 362 or by email to watercompliance@dwe.nsw.gov.au. All reports are confidential.

□ **NSW Murray Valley Outlook**
 As at 15 March 2010



NOTE: The volumes above are indicative only, they may change depending on when improvements occur and if they are accompanied by heavy local rain. Management of improved allocations will be discussed with the Critical Water Advisory Committee.

The numbers used in this assessment are approximate. A number of the assumptions relate to flows from the Queensland floods.

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