

15 December 2023

Murrumbidgee Regulated River Water Source

Water allocation update

There is an 8% increase to general security allocations from the latest resource assessment in the Murrumbidgee regulated river water source.

Cumulative general security allocation for 2023/24 has increased to 54% of entitlement. Together with the total volume carried forward, current average water availability across all general security licences is around 82% of entitlement.

The improvement has been supported by rainfall over the past few weeks allowing the capture of additional resource in Burrinjuck and reduced losses through the system. In addition to this, anticipation of releases from Snowy Hydro and further resource improvements means there is currently minimal risk to high priority needs in 2024/25.

The Murrumbidgee valley is now predominately regulated (except for a few reaches in the Yanco system), meaning releases from storages are being made to meet system requirements.

However, individual rainfall events can reduce demand and increase river flows, resulting in unregulated flows. Timely notifications will be provided, and water users should look to waterinsights.watersw.com.au for the latest supplementary access details. General security entitlement holders may also be eligible for take without debit to their accounts (subject to their licence conditions) under the uncontrolled flow (UCF) provisions in the water sharing plan.

The valley has recorded some 50,000 megalitres of UCF usage to date (accounts reconciliation processes may result in adjustments to this volume). An improvement in resources due to UCF usage will only be realised if allocations increase sufficiently from future resource improvements resulting in a conversion of UCF usage to debit usage on accounts.

Total general security water availability (carryover plus current year allocations) is currently 82% of entitlement. Increases in total general security water availability above 80% are required to be matched with a commensurate allocation to the Provisional Storage Volume 1 (PSV1) in accordance with the water sharing plan. The PSV1 account has been increased accordingly.

With dry conditions likely setting in, and a significant chance it remains dry for the coming months, reserves to assure high priority needs for 2024/25 are being carefully assessed. Each assessment going forward will need to consider risks to 2024/25 high priority commitments when deciding to

allocate further water in 2023/24. As shown in the data sheet below, a small volume of water (18 gigalitres) has already been set aside for the 2024/25 high priority needs reserve in this assessment.

Year to date allocations for 2023/24

2023/24	High Security	General Security	Average Carryover
Murrumbidgee	95%	54%	28%

Storage levels (as of 15 December 2023)

- Blowering Dam is about 76% full – holding about 1,240,000 megalitres (ML).
- Burrinjuck Dam is about 93% full – holding about 950,000 ML.

Climatic outlook

The latest Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) seasonal outlook for January to March does not show a clear indication of drier or wetter than average conditions for the upper Murrumbidgee catchments, while the lower Murrumbidgee is expected to experience drier than average conditions. Daytime and overnight temperatures are expected to be hotter than median over this period.

The Bureau's El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) index outlook indicator points to El Niño. Models indicate that El Niño conditions are likely to persist into autumn. Also, a positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) event is currently active, which models indicate may persist through summer. El Niño and positive IOD events typically influence weather conditions to become drier than median.

For further details: www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary

Trade

Trade out of the Murrumbidgee is open however trade into the Murrumbidgee is closed (as of 15 December 2023). Water users should monitor the WaterNSW website (www.waternsw.com.au) for daily information about the IVT account balance, the status of trade, and other information including seasonal trade closures. The Murrumbidgee IVT account is operated between limits of 0 GL and 100 GL, however the balance can move rapidly. The information presented in this statement is current at the time of writing.

A temporary restriction on interstate water trades (clause 71V of the *Water Management Act 2000*) into the NSW Murray, Lower Darling and Murrumbidgee regulated river water sources from other states has now lapsed. The restriction is based on the risk of spill from headwater storages in the NSW Murray system. Although the storages remain high (Hume currently 89% full), the spill risk

from headwater storages is expected to reduce over the coming months. Conditions will be closely monitored and any sustained risk of spill may require reinstatement of the temporary interstate trade restriction.

More information on temporary water restrictions can be found at the following link:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/temporary-water-restrictions>

Next announcement

The next Murrumbidgee water allocation statement will be published on Tuesday 2 January 2024. It will update current conditions and any improvements in water availability.

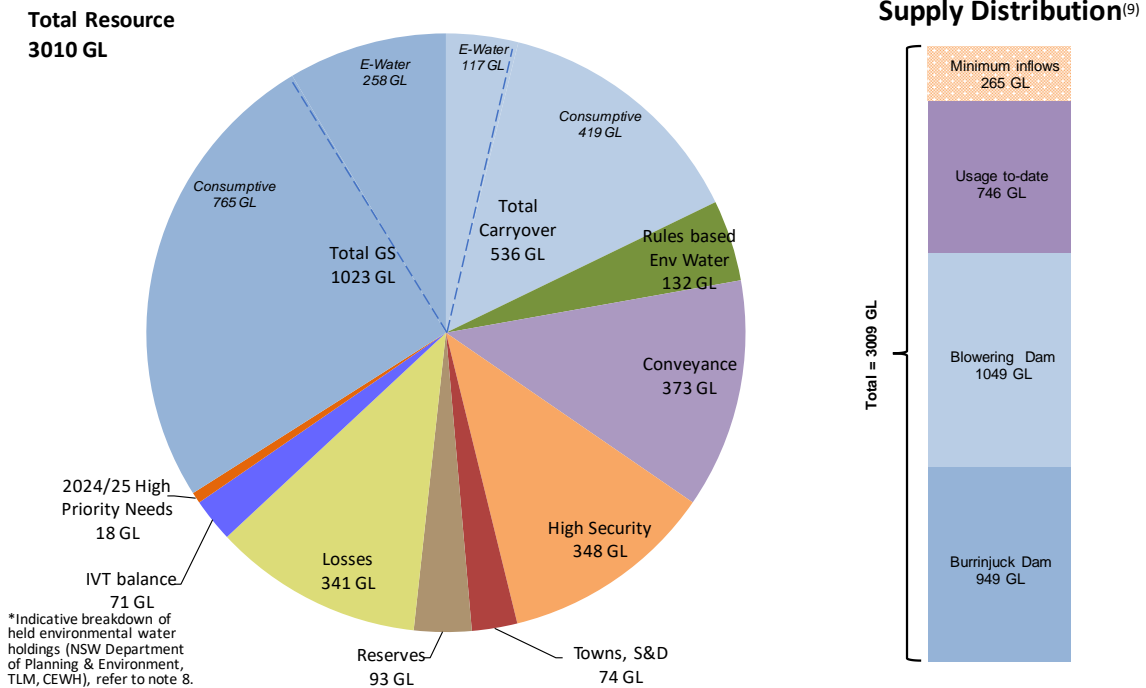
Note: Murrumbidgee statements are available from around 2:30pm on the day of the publication.

Murrumbidgee resource assessment data sheet

Resource Distribution* (15 December) for 2023-24	Volume (GL)
Total Available Resource ⁽¹⁾	3,009
less	
Carryover ⁽⁸⁾	536
Rules based Environmental Water ⁽²⁾	132
Towns, Stock, Domestic (100%)	74
Reserves ⁽³⁾	93
Conveyance ⁽⁴⁾	373
Announced High Security (95%)	348
Losses (transmission, evaporation, operational) ⁽⁵⁾	341
Murrumbidgee IVT account (this is the carryover remaining from 1 July) ⁽⁶⁾	71
Announced General Security (54%) ⁽⁸⁾	1023
Year 2 (2024-25) high priority needs ⁽⁷⁾	18

*See notes below

Murrumbidgee resource distribution 2023-24 – 15 December 2023



*See notes below

Data sheet notes

- 1) Total available resource – total active storage volume (Blowering & Burrinjuck Dams) at the day of assessment plus any usable flows in transit plus minimum inflows for rest of the year plus Snowy Hydro’s assured Required Annual Release (RAR) (including any flex (pre-release) from the prior year), as well as estimated usage to date. Snowy Hydro’s net Jounama Release for this year (2023-24) is estimated to be about 840 GL (includes montane release). Any pre-release of next year’s RAR is quarantined and will be used to support allocations in 2024/25.
- 2) Rules-based environmental water – water required to be set aside under water sharing plans to provide for riverine environments. Includes end-of-system flow requirements (currently 58 GL) and environmental water allowances (EWA1 = 74 GL, EWA2 = 0 GL, EWA3 = 0 GL). Excludes ‘licence-based’ environmental water also known as held environmental water (HEW). This total volume typically reduces as water is used during the year.
- 3) Reserves – required primarily under statutory plans, and mainly used for emergency purposes and critical needs. Includes 25 GL per dam as an operational reserve, and Provisional Storage Volumes (PSV1 = 43 GL, PSV2 = nil).
- 4) Conveyance entitlement – a category of access licence originally issued to Irrigation Corporations to enable delivery of water in their channel systems. Allocation is prescribed in the water sharing plan and is a function of high and general security allocation. Conveyance licences in the Murrumbidgee valley can carryover 30% of their entitlement.
- 5) Losses – the best estimate of the conservative volume required to run the river to meet demands for the remainder of the water year. This includes storage evaporation, transmission and operational loss. This estimate is updated monthly.
- 6) IVT account carryover value into 2023-24. Does not necessarily reflect the current IVT balance. Balance was reduced by 18 GL (equating to the IVT spill which occurred on 14 August 2023) from 89 GL to 71 GL.
- 7) 2024-2025 high priority needs on 1 July - volume set aside to cover high priority needs on 1 July 2024, for ‘Year 2’.
- 8) Held environmental water (HEW) – licenced water administered by environmental water holders is reported here, with the associated portions of general security allocation and carryover also identified in the above pie chart. This reporting of held environmental water is the total credited to accounts (not usage) and is estimated to be 258 GL of GS, 11 GL of HS, 76 GL of conveyance allocation and 117 GL of GS carryover. These entitlements are held and/or managed either singly or jointly by various environmental holder groups, including the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, TLM and CEWH. Details on environmental holdings can be found on individual agency websites.
- 9) Supply Distribution – the distribution of supply includes volumes at the time of the assessment for the following categories: active volumes in the dams, indicative usage to-date (may be estimates prior to reconciliation with hydrographic updates) and assumed minimum future inflows (includes Snowy Hydro’s guaranteed inflows for the water year). It also includes the current balance of the Blowering Compensation Account, which is held within the Snowy Scheme and only delivered if Blowering storage levels get critically low.

Chances of improvement

The chances of improved Murrumbidgee general security allocations based on a repeat of historical inflows, are provided in the table below under a variety of conditions. The forecast uses all years of available data, which gives a better outlook than using just the driest years on record (dry tercile).

It is important to note that these estimates are indicative improvements only and are not guaranteed allocations. Estimates are likely to change based on weather conditions, water user behaviour, water management decisions and other events. This means water users should use this information with caution and at their own risk, particularly as it projects many months ahead.

This projection does not incorporate any impact additional Snowy Hydro releases may have on allocations. Additional releases from Snowy Hydro above the Required Annual Release will be allocated or used to build reserves for 2024/25 high priority needs as they occur.

Forecast general security allocations (%)

(Any carryover water can be added to these indicative allocations)

Repeat of historical inflow conditions	1 Feb 2024
99 chances in 100 (extreme dry) (99%)	54%
9 chances in 10 (very dry) (90%)	54%
3 chances in 4 (dry) (75%)	56%
1 chance in 2 (median) (50%)	57%
1 chance in 4 (wet) (25%)	61%

Note 1: Estimated values indicative only, not guaranteed and subject to change based on actual events unfolding.

Note 2: Forecast assumes 28% carryover on average.

Water Allocation Guide

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Water has produced a series of guides to describe the water allocation methods for most NSW regulated river systems. The guide for the Murrumbidgee regulated system is available at the following link:

<https://water.dpie.nsw.gov.au/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process>

Subscribe [here](#) to receive the Department of Planning and Environment's monthly email update on water planning, management and reform in New South Wales.

You can also follow the Department on Twitter: @NSWDPIE_Water

Feedback on this work or any aspect of the Department's service can be provided using the widget at <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/contact>