Australian Government
Bureau of Meteorology

Water Reporting Summary - NSW Murray and Lower Darling Catchments

3 August 2020

Overview

- In the past month, most of the NSW Murray and Lower Darling catchments received less than 25 mm of rainfall with areas in the west of the region receiving less than 10 mm of rainfall. Only some alpine parts of the upper NSW Murray catchment received up to 100 mm of rain (Figure 1). The total area-average rainfall across both catchments was 11 mm. This recent patchy rainfall is in the context of the extended dry period since January 2017, particularly for the central parts of the NSW Murray catchment and the Lower Darling catchment, with rainfall being mainly very much below average or lowest on record (Figure 2).
- Dry conditions in the Lower Darling have resulted in below and very much below average root zone soil moisture during July. Recent patchy rainfall in the upper NSW Murray has helped to maintain mostly average soil moisture conditions which has also translated into some runoff and inflows into storages (Figure 3). Drought Stage 2 conditions have eased to Stage 1 conditions in the NSW Murray catchment, however Drought Stage 2 conditions remain in the Darling catchments. In Drought Stage 2 (Emerging drought or drought recovery), there has been limited water resources and multiple years of low flows (NSW DPIE). As there has been only limited improvement in water resources, allocations for some entitlement holders remain low (Figure 4 and Table 1).
- General security allocations in the NSW Murray and Lower Darling catchments are currently 3% and 30% respectively. For this time of year, these announced allocations are the highest in the last three years. Allocation prices have started the 2020-21 water year higher than last month ($195-345 per ML compared to $220 per ML) but are well below their peak of over $800 per ML in January 2020 (Table 1).

Recent conditions

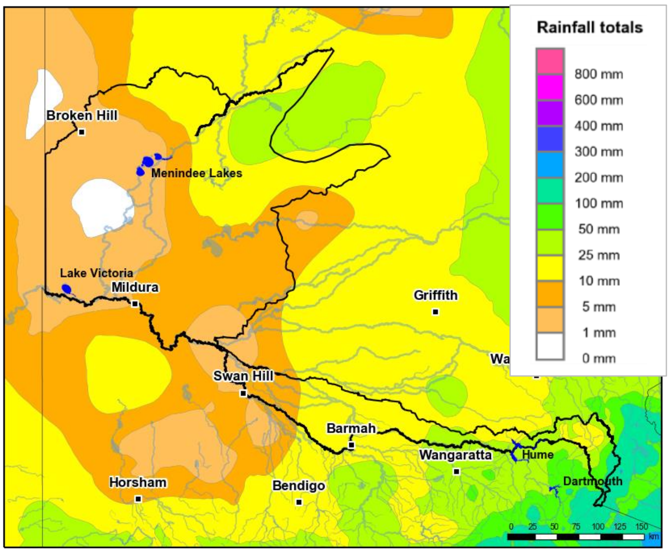

Figure 1: Rainfall totals for the last 30 days (5 July to 3 Aug 2020)

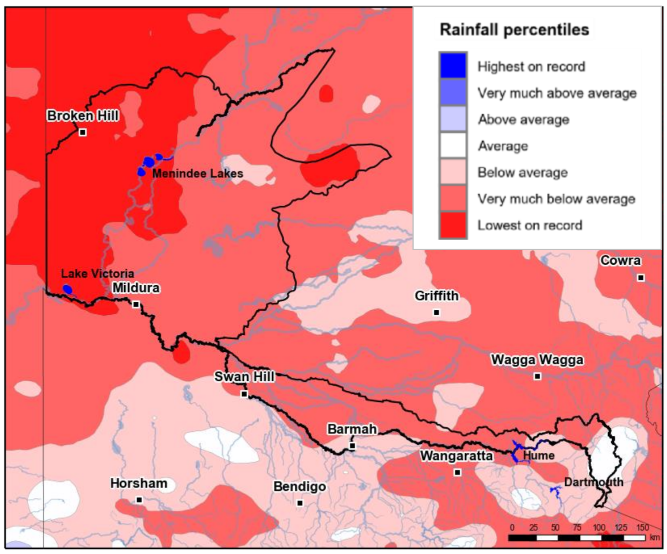

Figure 2: Rainfall percentiles since January 2017 (Compared to 1900-2019 long-term average) (Jan 2017 to July 2020)

Note: Rainfall percentiles for the period from January 2017 are shown as the Bureau of Meteorology considers January 2017 to be the start of the current dry period for eastern Australia.

How much water is in the storages?

Combined total storage (NSW share*): 2,081 GL (as at end June 2020)
*New South Wales' share of Dartmouth, Hume, Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes storages

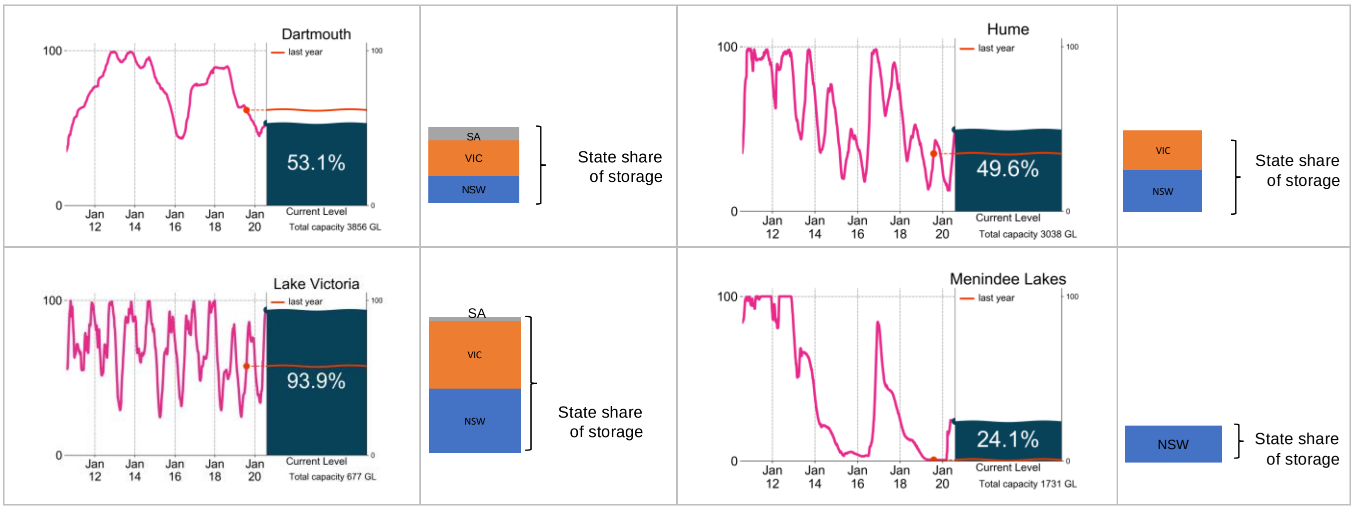

Figure 3: Current total storage (% of total capacity) as at 3 August 2020 compared to the last ten years (State shares updated end June 2020)
Source: BoM water storages dashboard and MDBA

Who is the water for?

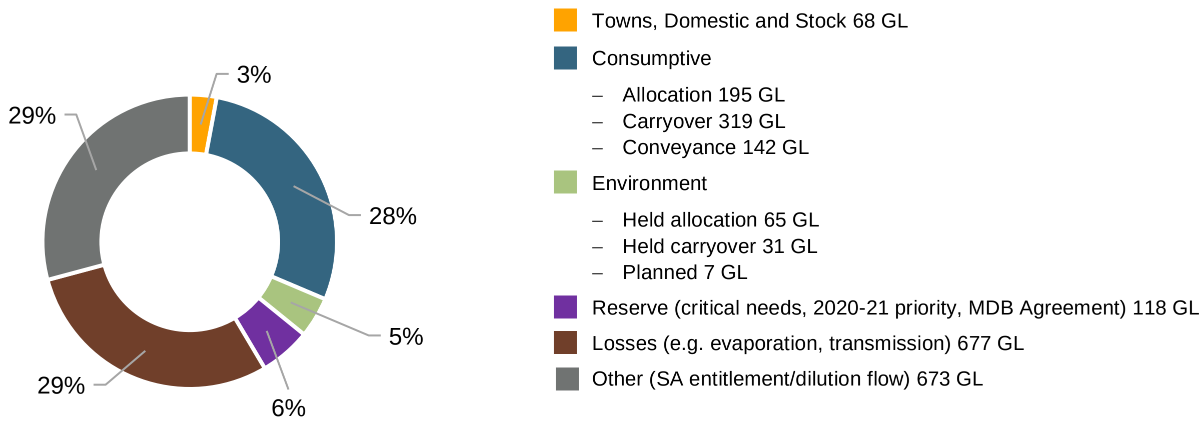

Figure 4: Volumes of water allocated (% of total) for the 2020-21 water year (as at 3 August 2020)
Source: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

NB: Allocation information shown here is water allocated for various purposes as at 3 August 2020. It does not represent remaining available allocated water as it does not allow for water used, traded or new storage inflows (in excess of minimum assumptions). Water allocation figures shown here differ to those on WaterNSW's Water Insights, which shows estimated water available over a two-year planning period (2020 to 2022).

Table 1: Allocation announcements (%) and market prices – Selected licence categories as at 3 August 2020

Licence category	Announced allocation	Historic comparison (same time of year)	Entitlement Prices (monthly median)	Allocation Price (median - last 7 days)
Stock and Domestic	100%	Same as most years	n/a	$195ML* (NSW Murray-above Barmah Choke) $345/ML (NSW Murray-below Barmah Choke) n/a (Lower Darling)
NSW Murray High Security	97%	Same as most years	$8,900/ML*	
Lower Darling High Security	100%	Same as most years	n/a	
NSW Murray General Security	3%	First allocation for this time of year since 2017-18	$1,850	
Lower Darling General Security	30%	Highest allocation in since 2017-18	n/a	
Average Carryover (General Security)	22% (NSW Murray) 48% (Lower Darling)	18% last year (NSW Murray) 19% last year (Lower Darling)	n/a	

*Indicative - limited trade data

Source: NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and BoM water markets dashboard

FIND OUT MORE

For more information email water@bom.gov.au