



Regional Drought Report

April 2020

Issued 15th May 2020

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About WaterNSW

WaterNSW is a State-Owned Corporation established under the *Water NSW Act 2014* and operates under an Operating Licence issued and monitored by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART).

We operate the state's rivers and water supply systems in accordance with the rules set out by regulators. With more than 40 dams across the state, we supply two-thirds of water used in NSW to regional towns, irrigators, Sydney Water Corporation and local water utilities. We also own and operate the largest surface and groundwater monitoring network in the southern hemisphere and build, maintain and operate essential infrastructure.

WaterNSW is working alongside NSW Government and local water authorities in responding to one of the worst droughts ever experienced in NSW. WaterNSW is now managing water in some storages to meet critical human needs as the highest priority.

WaterNSW – drought reporting

This drought in many regions across NSW is officially the worst on record. The impact of the drought is severe and is the most prominent issue of our times. As the dam, storage and river operator, WaterNSW has a key role in providing accurate, up to date data to our customers, local communities and many stakeholders.

Given the strong community interest in water, water management and the drought we are committed to ensuring the public can access data from across our system to see first-hand the severity of this drought, what we are doing to respond and the many ways you can connect with us to stay up to date.

Our approach to keeping you updated on this drought includes:

1. **Live/Daily Information** – this is available from our website www.watarnsw.com.au where we have dedicated pages to show you the latest data and information. We have dedicated pages on all aspects of our drought operations, drought links, along with information on our emergency drought works being undertaken to extend water supplies for critical human needs. Our information combined with that from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), NSW Government via the www.droughthub.nsw.gov.au, and other key sources such as the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) provide a thorough and complete overview of all aspects of water, inflows, releases, weather forecasts, data and seasonal outlooks.

2. **Monthly** – WaterNSW produces a monthly regional drought report. This report is available through subscribing to our email updates and via our website. We encourage you to register to our subscription service so you will receive the report directly into your inbox on the day of release.
3. **Quarterly** – From 2020, WaterNSW will introduce a quarterly seasonal outlook. This will be based on the BOM seasonal outlooks and combined with our own analysis, we aim for this to provide some broader context of the issues and challenges WaterNSW will need to manage, as well as the latest BOM forecast links and updates on our priority drought projects.
4. **Annual** – WaterNSW Annual Water Operations Plans for each valley will be available via our website.

Latest drought update

Rainfall was experienced across the state in April, resulting in a rise in active storage in some valleys. However, northern dams received relatively small inflows, with a majority of the rain events occurring below storage catchments. This is particularly true for Chaffey, Split Rock and Wyangala Dams.

The Lower Darling is continuing to rise. Up from 0.2% at the end of February to 10.3% at the end of March, to 19% at the end of April. Storage levels are expected to continue to rise over the coming weeks as inflows continue.

Our priority remains extending water supply for critical human needs in many valleys such as the Peel and Macquarie Valleys.

Key points:

- WaterNSW recorded varying inflows across the state in April with total active storage rising from 24.8% at the end of March to 26.7% as of 27 April.
- The Murray Darling has continued to receive inflows with releases to the Lower Darling continuing.
- Water quality issues were experienced in April 2020 in some rivers and storages with algal alerts advised via our website and media updates.
- While we have seen rain over the past few months, several more months of above average rainfall is required to see any recovery from the prolonged long-term rainfall deficiencies and low to very low storage levels in most valleys.



- Recreational areas of all dams, including visitor centres, camping areas, picnic areas and public toilets remain closed due to COVID-19.

If you would like to subscribe to our more detailed, weekly and valley specific water operations and availability reports please do this via:

<https://www.watersw.com.au/customer-service/news/subscribe>

Emergency drought works and key valley updates

Peel Valley drought works

- The Peel Valley is in Stage 4 Critical Drought.
- The temporary weir, pipeline and pumps have been installed and the water supply is being redirected to the existing Dungowan to Tamworth water supply pipeline.
- The transfer of the water supply from the Peel River is in operation 24 /7.
- The temporary measures are reducing transmission losses from water travelling via the Peel River to Tamworth.
- Commissioning of the Stage 2 Chaffey to Dungowan pipeline has commenced with the project due for completion in mid-May.

Chaffey Dam is at 13.8% of active capacity as at 27 April, releasing approximately 13 to 30ML/d throughout April.

Macquarie Valley drought works

- The Macquarie is in Stage 4 Drought.
- Inflows to the Burrendong Dam have continued with supply increasing from 7.2% (as at 30 March 2020) to 16.6% as of 27 April. As such, emergency drought works have been reassessed accordingly and rescheduled to meet updated forecasts on water depletion in the Macquarie Valley.
- Pumping the deep-water storage at Burrendong Dam will be rescheduled. To date we have completed the upgrade of the power supply to the dam and the temporary floating pumping station has been commissioned, however, the final earth works will be rescheduled in line with the revised dam depletion forecast. We will continue to monitor the water supply inflows to Burrendong dam and re-activate the deep storage access project when water levels at the dam decrease below 2.3%.
- Bulk water transfer from Windamere to Burrendong Dam has been postponed. Storms and isolated stream flows have postponed the second phase of the transfer between Windamere to Burrendong to at least March 2021.
- The transfer will leave a minimum of 70GL in Windamere Dam, which secures local supply for five to seven years,
- We are continuing our early investigations into supplying water to meet critical needs to Nyngan and Cobar.
- Preliminary meetings have recently been held with key stakeholders from Nyngan

and Cobar to discuss the project, and gather the information required for selection of the ground water investigation sites and development of the concept design.

- Further consultation is being planned for the coming months to keep stakeholders and communities updated. The next round of engagement will take into account measures being placed due to the COVID 19 restrictions.

Brogo Valley and Bega River update

- Brogo Dam is at 100% capacity and spilling (end of April).
- Toonumbar Dam remains steady at 69.5% capacity.
- WaterNSW has been working closely with Bega Valley Shire Council to monitor inflows and water quality.
- Valve upgrade works has commenced at Toonumbar Dam, which will cause interruptions to the supply downstream. More information is available on our website.

Menindee update

- Inflows to the lakes commenced on 10 March 2020.
- Menindee Lakes system collectively holds about 17% active capacity, releasing 340ML/d. Lake Wetherall 88%, Lake Tandure 95%, Lake Pamamaroo 43%, Copi Hollow 37%, while Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla remain dry.
- Current forecasts indicate that in total around 630GL is expected to reach the lakes.

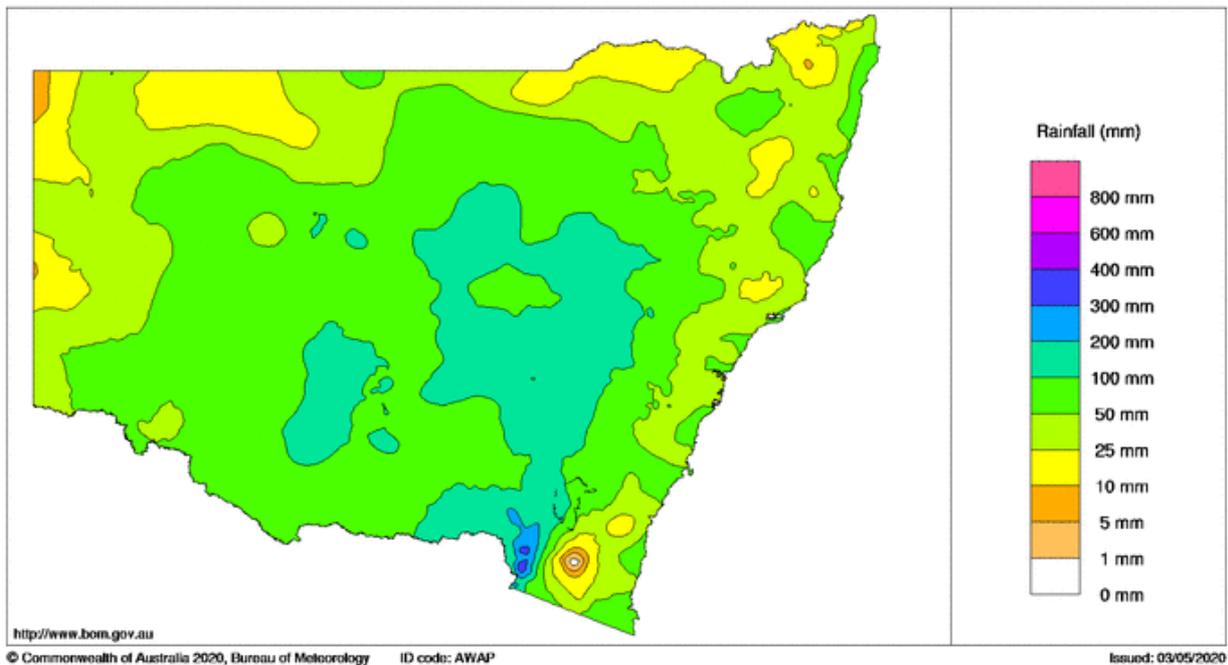
Monthly outlook - Rainfall

Latest rainfall deficiency map 1 February to 30 April – BOM

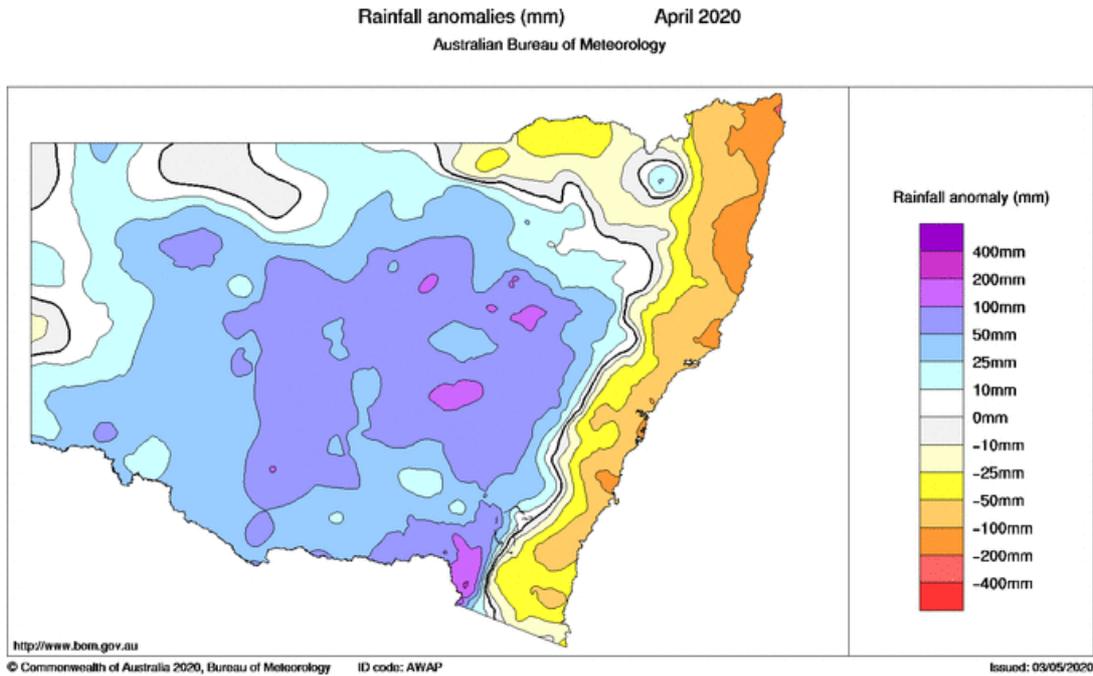


Previous month rainfall (NSW) – BOM

New South Wales Rainfall totals (mm) April 2020
 Australian Bureau of Meteorology

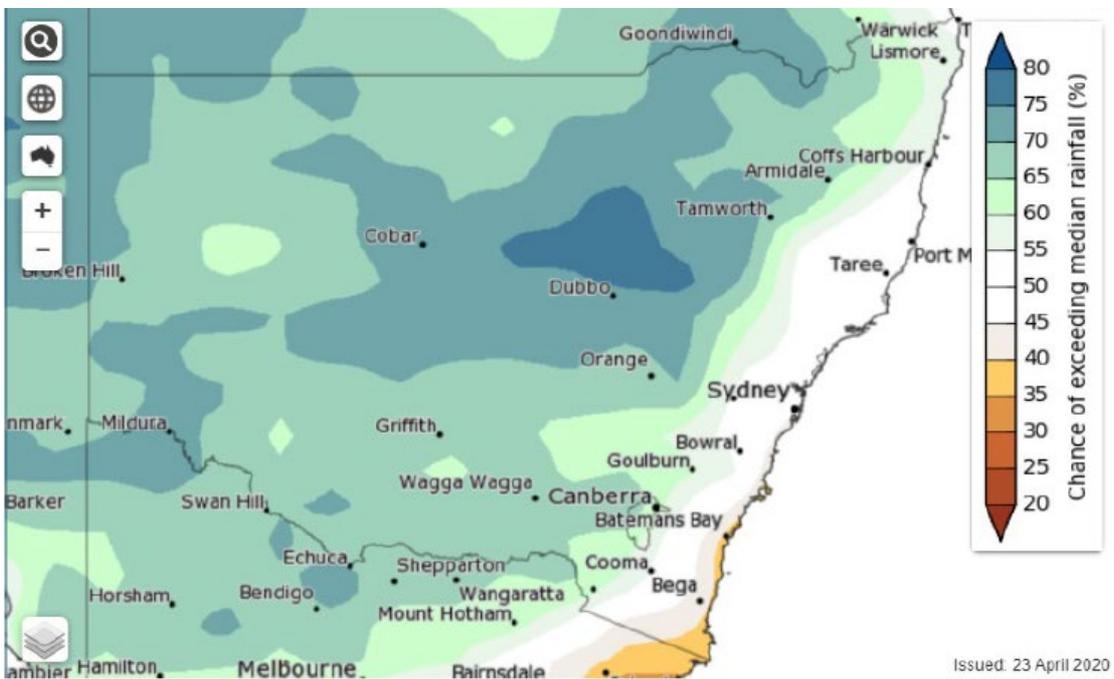


Rainfall anomaly for past month



Summary of monthly BoM update May to July

The BOM has advised that there is a high chance of a wetter than average May to July for most parts of western NSW.



Source: Australian Bureau of Meteorology

While recent rain has brought slight improvements across some river systems, this has not translated into significant increases in active storage levels.

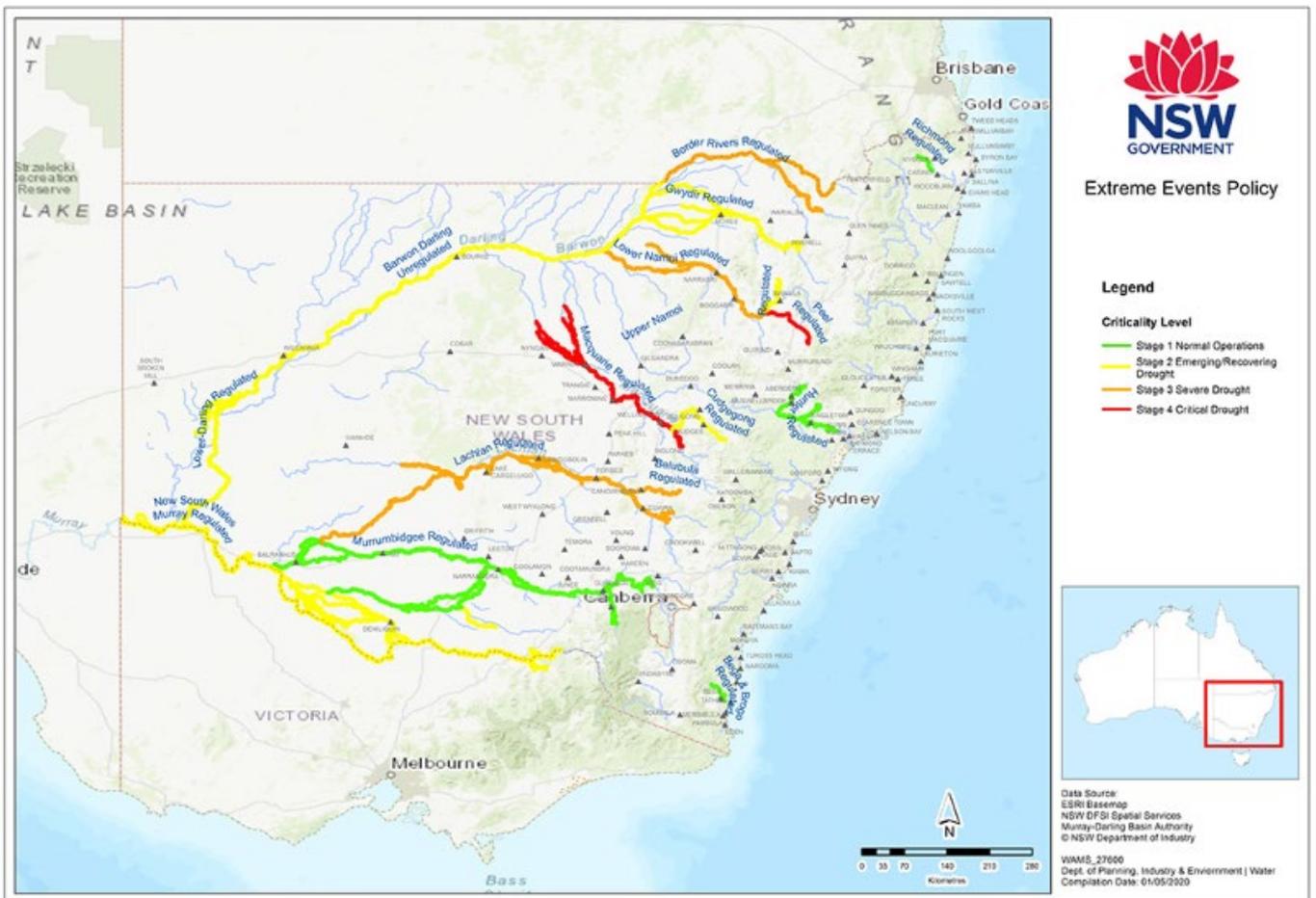
Given this, and ongoing climatic forecasting provided by the BOM, WaterNSW will remain focused on delivering our drought projects in critical valleys.

The BOM information and data is an excellent source of weather and drought information and forecasts.

Please follow this link to see their latest outlook video:

www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks

Critical drought map (as at 01/05/2020)

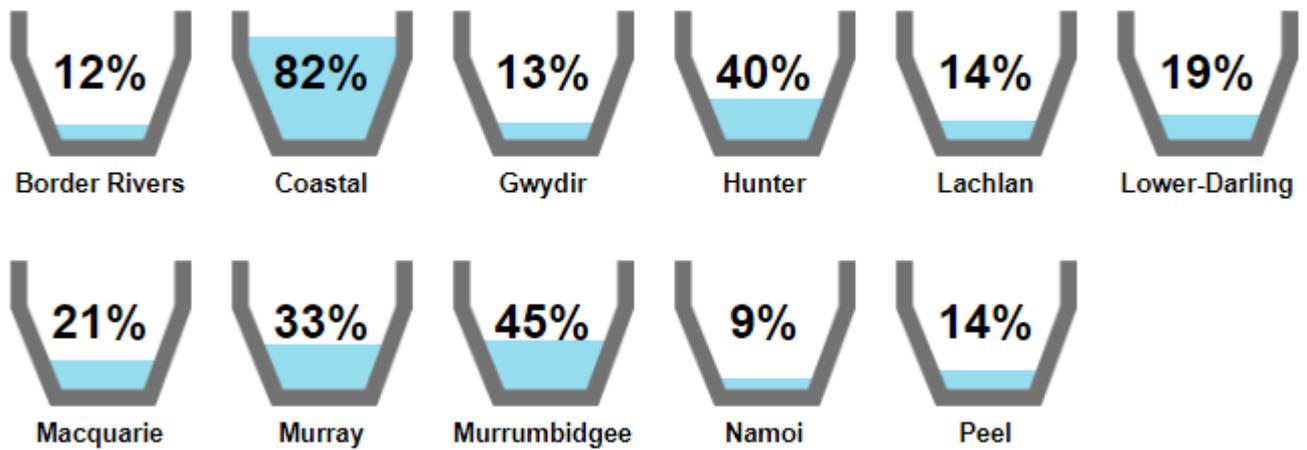


Water quality report

Red algal alerts continue at multiple sites around NSW. These latest alerts are available at <https://www.watersw.com.au/water-quality/algae>

WaterNSW regularly updates water quality advices via our website and local media.

Regional Storage levels as of end of April 2020



Stakeholder and community information sessions

WaterNSW has been involved in supporting the Department of Primary Industries - Water (DPI Water) Drought Roadshows around regional NSW along with leading our regular stakeholder consultation sessions.

WaterNSW's Customer Advisory Groups (CAGs) are the primary forum we regularly consult, on an area basis, with a broad cross-section of our customers on issues relevant to our operating licence and customer service charter. Membership include customers from the regulated and unregulated streams, groundwater irrigators, stock and domestic water users, major water utilities, local water utilities, local government, environmental water users and Indigenous Australian water users.

The last round of CAGs meetings were held between 25 February and 26 March 2020. The next round is due to start 30 June 2020.

Our River Operations Stakeholder Consultation Committee (ROSCCOs) are valley based, ongoing committees formed with key stakeholders. These committees improve understanding of river system and to discuss current stakeholder concerns. Generally, discussions at the ROSCCOs include:

- Current storage levels and predictions under various scenarios
- Critical water needs in 2020
- Stock and domestic replenishment flows
- Treatment of tributary inflows
- Potential, temporary infrastructure options or other actions for managing the drought
- Groundwater issues and water quality issues
- Other items as required

Planned ROSCCo 2020 meeting dates May 2020:

- Lower Darling – Monday 18 May (teleconference)
- Macquarie Valley – Wednesday 20 May (teleconference)

If you would like to know more, visit these links where you will also find copies of our presentations and notes that are freely available to the public:

CAGs - www.waternsw.com.au/customer-service/feedback/groups

ROSCCOs - www.waternsw.com.au/supply/regional-nsw/roscco

Where to find more information

The primary source of up to date information from the NSW Government regarding the drought and drought support, please visit www.droughthub.nsw.gov.au

Other useful links

The Bureau of Meteorology:

www.bom.gov.au/climate/drought/

Rural Areas Mental Health Support:

www.ramhp.com.au/get-help-now/drought-support/

NSW Government's Emergency Drought Relief Package:

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/climate-and-emergencies/droughthub

The Federal Government's Drought Communities Programme (DCP):

<http://regional.gov.au/regional/programs/drought-communities.aspx>

The Safe and Secure Water Program (SSWP):

www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/water-utilities/infrastructure-programs/safe-and-secure-water-program/about