

# Regional drought update

24 April 2019



## Key customer messages

A combination last month's rain, stream flows and the Section 324 Temporary Water Restriction are providing some relief for critical water needs in the Namoi valley, including flows into Walgett Weir, which have had cease to flow conditions in place since late December. Flows have also recommenced in the Barwon River upstream of Brewarrina.

Environmental releases in the Gwydir and Border Rivers for native fish refuge have commenced. Stock and domestic supplies in these rivers will be available but customers wishing to extract Stock and Domestic water must place an order by 29 April. If customers do not have an approved order they are not allowed to extract water in these systems.

A Section 324 Temporary Water Restriction on access to the Environmental Water is in place to prevent access of the water by A Class, B Class and C Class Barwon-Darling license holders. The water is not expected to reach the Barwon at Collarenebri until mid-May.

Overall, regional valley storages vary significantly in security, with the Namoi, Barwon-Darling and Lower-Darling having cease to flow conditions, and Gwydir and Border also ceasing to flow in western sections. Environmental releases in the Gwydir and Border Rivers for native fish refuge will also provide stock and domestic supplies in these rivers and Barwon River over the next few months.

The major rainfall event in late March resulted in high flows moving down the Warrego River means WaterNSW are closely monitoring the flows as they continue down the Warrego in coming weeks. However, hopes of these flows reaching the Darling and providing some relief for drought-ravaged communities between Louth and Menindee remain small. This rainfall event will help prepare the northern tributaries to better catch any subsequent rain events.

Temperatures are forecast to remain very mild during the week. Rainfall of up to 25mm is forecast across the central to western regions.

## Last week's weather

Rainfall of up to 60mm was received across the far west of NSW.

## This week's weather forecast

The Bureau states that:

A high pressure system over the Tasman Sea is maintaining a ridge towards northeast New South Wales. Meanwhile, a low pressure trough is moving into the state's west, associated with a cold front passing to the south. This trough is expected to linger over southern and western districts during the next couple of days, promoting unsettled weather in many areas. By mid-week the

region is again expected to be dominated by a ridge of high pressure, albeit briefly, as another trough looks set to move through during in the second half of the week.

For the first part of the week, rainfall of up to 25mm is predicted to fall across the Riverina, Lower and Upper Western and Central West parts of the state. Negligible rainfall should also be received across the coastal regions. The North West Slopes & Plains region is predicted to remain dry. The second part of the week is expected to remain dry throughout New South Wales.

Temperatures across most of the state should range between 15 – 27 degrees. The Snowy Mountain regions should see temperatures of 0 – 6 degrees.

## Operational Update

Currently, 99.5% of NSW remains in drought, according to the state government's Combined Drought Indicator, and the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Flows in the northern NSW tributaries are the lowest on record over the last two years and flows have been amongst the lowest on record over the last 6 years (except for the last 6 months of 2016).

### Gwydir and Border Rivers

WaterNSW commenced releasing water from Copeton Dam, and from next week, Glenlyon Dam to deliver environmental water orders from OEH and CEWO for native fish in the Gwydir, Border and Barwon Rivers over the next 2-3 months. Releases commenced this week from Copeton Dam at about 400ML/d and from Glenlyon Dam later in April at up to 800ML/d.

Total releases are expected to be between 27 and 36GL and may reach Brewarrina but are unlikely to reach Bourke without further rainfall.

### Warrego

March rainfall across the Warrego catchment in Queensland has made its way to NSW.

The major rainfall event in late March resulted in high flows moving down the Warrego River, with flows at Cunnamulla Weir in southern Queensland peaking at around 80,000 ML/day on 4 April.

While these flows are providing significant environmental benefits along the Warrego, based on previous events of this size very little of the water is expected to reach the Darling due to the flat terrain and the extensive wetlands on the Warrego.

Further rainfall of over 60mm in parts of the far west of NSW have led to additional river rises in the Warrego and nearby (isolated) sections of the Darling River. WaterNSW will be closely monitoring the flows as they continue down the Warrego in coming weeks.

**Lower Darling:**

Releases from Wetherell reduced on 12 February to the rate that ceased flows at Weir32 but will be sufficient to maintain the residual pool in Weir32.

WaterNSW constructed and filled four temporary block banks. Several customers along the Lower-Darling obtained WaterNSW approval to install individual block banks, in locations between the four temporary banks.

Block banks are slowly being drawn down by customer use and evaporation. The rate of decrease has slowed as we move in to cooler months, but water is only forecast to be available for customers through to August/September. With no flow into the northern system over the last 6 months the risk of customers not having water after September is increasing.

High levels of blue green algae continue within the lakes and the Lower-Darling River. This is having an impact on water quality and restricting access to the lakes, especially Copi Hollow, for recreational use.

**Namoi:**

Recent rain had re-established small flows in the Namoi River between Keepit Dam and Walgett. Flows have now ceased again between Keepit and Wee Waa but the river continues to flow into the Walgett Weir pool at decreasing rates.

The Section 324 Temporary Water Restriction remains in place to ensure this water travels as far as possible for critical human needs.

Releases from Keepit Dam ceased on 16 December 2018, with Keepit Dam now at 0.7% of active capacity.

No further releases are planned without further inflows.

WaterNSW is working with mines to take supplies from recent inflows and identify alternate water supplies (e.g. groundwater) in case it doesn't rain and there are no river flows.

**Macquarie:**

Current inflows to the lower Macquarie from the Castlereagh River, downstream of the Macquarie Marshes, are flowing into the Barwon River upstream of Brewarrina.

Inflows from tributaries between Burrendong Dam and Warren have been managed into the Lower Bogan River, Marra Creek and Lower Macquarie River for critical human needs.

Burrendong is currently at 7.0% of capacity and deliveries to town water and stock and domestic supplies are being maintained from this volume. Burrendong Dam had been drawn below 10% on five similar occasions (June 1995, Jan 1998, Apr 2003, May 2004 and Jan 2007).

## Details

Valley		Storage Volume (GL)	Weekly inflows (GL)	Releases ML/d	Comment	GS % AWD	AWD Inflows Required
Valley	Dams						
<b>Border</b>	Pindari	18.0	0	15	Minimum releases from Pindari. No releases from Glenlyon. CEWH is about to start releasing water from Glenlyon to provide a fish refuge event in the Barwon-Darling.	2.7	20.8
	Glenlyon	31.0	0	0			
<b>Gwydir</b>	Copeton	153.8	0	400	CEWH and OEH are releasing water from Copeton to provide a fish refuge event in the Barwon-Darling. Releases from Glenlyon will follow.	0	36
<b>Namoi</b>	Split Rock	10.4	0	34	Split Rock bulk water transfer complete – current releases are for Upper Namoi needs. No further releases from Keepit into the Lower Namoi until inflows occur.	0	80
	Keepit	3.1	0	0			
<b>Peel</b>	Chaffey	26.4	0	69	Chaffey Dam releases for Tamworth with very little irrigation demand. Level 3 water restriction for Tamworth.	38	N/A***

Valley		Storage Volume (GL)	Weekly inflows (GL)	Releases ML/d	Comment	GS % AWD	AWD Inflows Required
Valley	Dams						
<b>Macquarie</b>	Burrendong	112.3	0	280	Current releases from Burrendong Dam are for town and D&S demand.	0	273
	Windamere	123.8	0	34	Current release from Windamere Dam are for Cudgegong demand as the bulk water transfer has been deferred.		
<b>Lachlan</b>	Wyangala	386	0	730	Current releases from Wyangala Dam are for irrigation, TWS and S&D demand.	0	188
	Carcoar	8.5	0	25	Current releases from Carcoar Dam are for irrigation and S&D demand. Due to drought conditions, the end of system daily environmental flow requirement is only met intermittently.		
<b>Murrumbidgee</b>	Burrinjuck	308	2.2	964	Releases for: irrigation, planned environmental water (180ML/d at Balranald and 50ML/day at Darlot) and held environmental water to Lowbidgee.	7	75
	Blowering	413	22*	973			

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Valley	Dams						
<b>Murray</b>	Hume	432	22**	11,000	Transfers from Hume for South Australia continues at lower rates.	0	60
<b>Barwon-Darling</b>			0	N/A	Cease to flow conditions: Walgett – no flow since 21 July 2018; Bourke – no flow since 27 August; Wilcannia – no flow since 8 September	N/A	N/A
<b>Lower-Darling</b>	Menindee	17	0	Negligible	Four block banks have been constructed and filled, pipes closed. Releases from Lake Wetherell ceased on 12 Feb 2019. Supply to Broken Hill is being met from W2BH pipeline.	0	N/A

\* Includes inflows from Snowy Hydro, already budgeted.

\*\* Includes inflows from Dartmouth and Snowy Hydro, already budgeted.

## More information

Stay up-to-date with storage levels, system risks and climate conditions across NSW. You can also find valley-specific information about storage status, predicted release patterns and operating conditions. Subscribe to have the report emailed to you each week. Please visit our website at [waterNSW.com.au/subscribe](https://waterNSW.com.au/subscribe) for more information.

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