

16 March 2026

NSW Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers

Water allocation update

There is **no change in allocations** to general security (GS) licences in the NSW Murray Regulated River Water Source at this time. The cumulative allocation to GS entitlements remains at 20% for 2025–26 water year. The current balance of general security water holders is 467 GL or an average of 28% of their entitlement. Note that individual balances may be higher or lower than this percentage subject to their water use decisions.

This statement confirms the current water year allocations and offers an outlook for the potential opening allocations for the 2026/27 water year on 1 July 2026.

We are building reserves to secure the opening allocation of higher priority needs due on 1 July 2026. Resource improvements are being set aside first to meet this reserve until full. According to the latest information, the required reserve for next year is approximately 236 GL, of which a total of 204 GL has been secured by now.

This assessment is based on NSW's share of storage volumes as of the end of February and observed inflows up to 10 March 2026. It also includes a conservative projection of inflows for the rest of March, tapering from observed rates towards minimum inflows. It then assumes minimum inflows from March to the end of the water year. For Menindee, no inflows are considered for the rest of the 2025–26 water year.

Entitlements in the Lower Darling Regulated River Water Source were fully allocated on 1 July 2025.

Current allocation (NSW Murray)

| 16 March 2026 | Allocation increment | Account balance |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| General security | 0% | 467 GL |

Inflow outlook

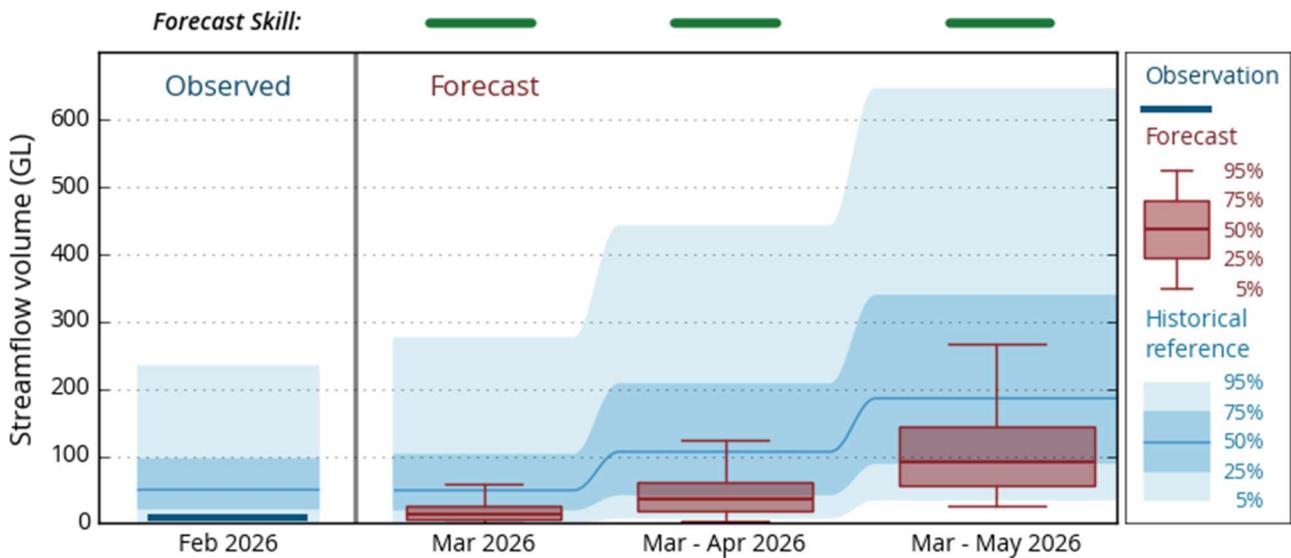
The Bureau of Meteorology issues a seasonal streamflow forecast for the unregulated inflow into Hume Dam (see the figure below). Though preliminary, this may suggest the potential inflows into Hume Dam in the coming months.

For the March to May 2026 period, the forecast quantiles sit considerably lower than their historical equivalents, suggesting that lower than historical inflows are likely for this period.

The graph for March to May 2026 is shown below, and updates can be found at: [Seasonal Streamflow Forecasts: Water Information: Bureau of Meteorology](#)

Unregulated inflow to Hume Dam

Forecast for Mar 2026 – May 2026



Generated: 23:15 05/03/2026 (ver. 2.11.1)

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Storage volumes

| 28 February 2026 | Full supply level (GL) | Dead storage (GL) | Total volume in storage (GL) | NSW share* (GL) | NSW share* (as %) |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Dartmouth Dam | 3,856 | 71 | 2,300 | 847 | 22% |
| Hume Dam | 2,982 | 23 | 763 | 391 | 13% |
| Lake Victoria | 677 | 100 | 281 | 96 | 17% |
| Menindee Lakes [#] | 1,731 | 480 [#] | 682 | 133 | 11% |
| Total | | | | 1,467 GL | |

*Active volume of NSW share and % of the NSW share of the total storage’s active capacity; maximum share is 50%.

NSW has sole access to water when the storage falls below 480 GL.

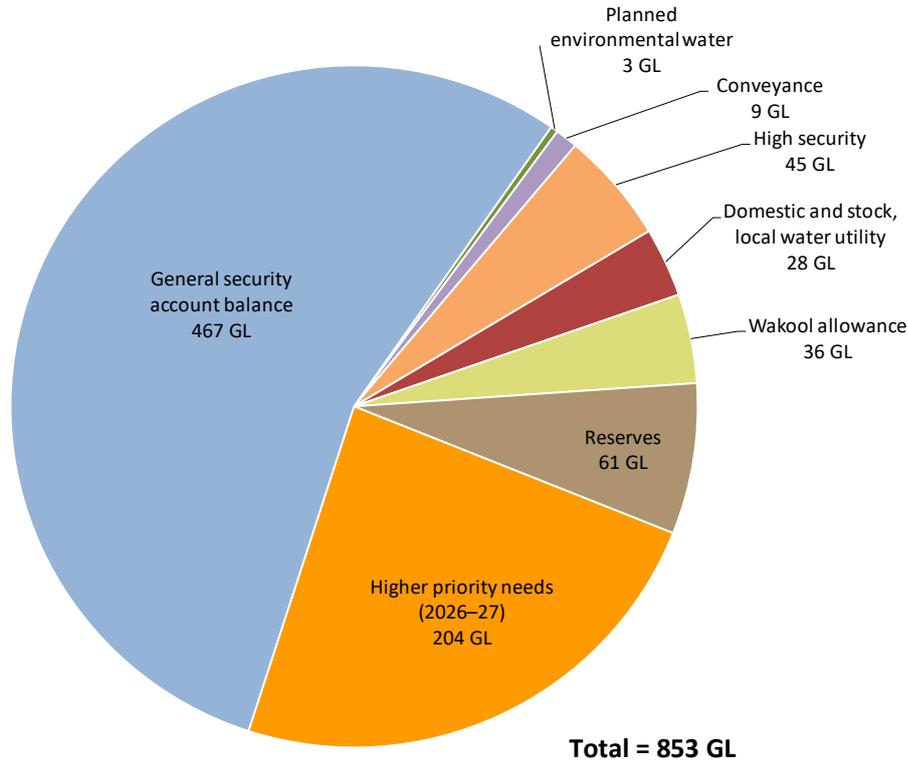
NSW Murray resource assessment data sheet

| Resource distribution (15 March 2026 to 30 June 2026) | Volume (GL) |
|--|-------------|
| Available resource for allocation | 853 |
| Storage volumes NSW share ⁽¹⁾ | 1,467 |
| Future resources ⁽²⁾ | 216 |
| less overheads and SA commitments ⁽³⁾ | (830) |
| <i>less</i> | |
| Planned environmental water ⁽⁴⁾ | 3 |
| Domestic and stock, local water utility balance ⁽⁵⁾ | 28 |
| High security balance ⁽⁵⁾ | 45 |
| Conveyance balance ⁽⁵⁾ | 9 |
| General security balance ⁽⁶⁾ | 467 |
| Wakool allowance ⁽⁷⁾ | 36 |
| Critical human water needs ⁽⁸⁾ | 61 |
| 2026–27 higher priority reserve ⁽⁹⁾ | 204 |
| <i>equals</i> | |
| Surplus (or deficit) ⁽¹⁰⁾ | 0 |

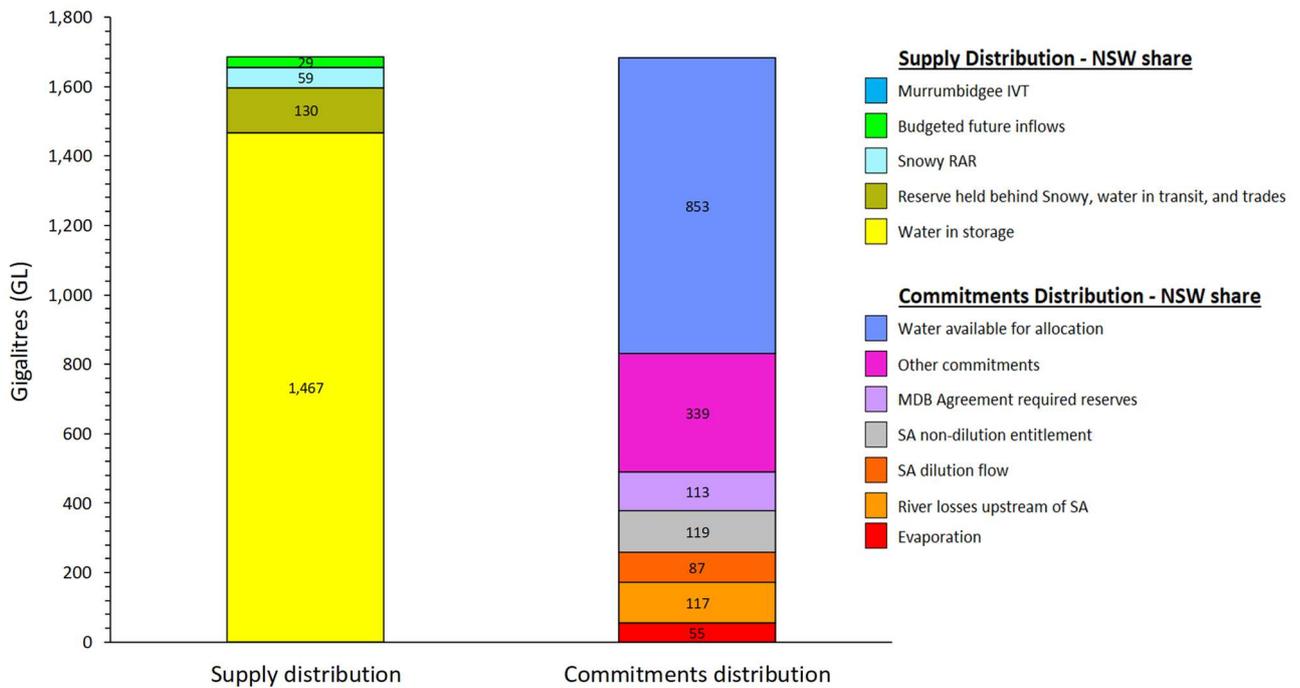
Notes:

- (1) The NSW share of active storage volume in Hume, Dartmouth, Menindee and Lake Victoria as of 28/02/2026.
- (2) Budgeted minimum inflows (04/1980 to 05/1980); plus estimated inflow recessions; plus any usable flows in transit; plus water from inter valley trade; plus expected regulated inflow from Snowy Hydro till 30/4/2026; plus drought reserve held in Snowy.
- (3) Budgeted evaporation and transmission loss; plus SA's entitlements & dilution flow; plus conveyance reserve; plus Menindee commitments; plus NS Active Environmental Water.
- (4) The volume includes 3 GL of Murray Additional Allowance (MAA), 0 GL of Barmah-Millewa Allowance (B-MA), 0 GL of River Murray Increased Flows (RMIF). The total commitments to MAA, B-MA and RMIF will decrease over the water year as they are released from Hume. The balance of B-MA is 172 GL as of 31/01/2026 which has been fully borrowed and will be paid back from future inflows after GS allocations reach 30%.
- (5) Account balance remaining in higher priorities and conveyance licence categories.
- (6) General security accounts balance as of 10/03/2026. This includes carried over volume from last water year, plus any new allocation, plus any trade adjustments, minus usage to date. For information, about 524 GL (31%) was carried over on 1/7/2025.
- (7) Wakool allowance – a conveyance volume necessary for NSW to operate the Edward-Wakool system. The annual budget to deliver the potential maximum allocation to the water users in the system is 70 GL.
- (8) The volume to be stored by NSW for critical human water needs as per Clause 11.03 of the Basin Plan.
- (9) Volume set aside for opening allocation to higher priority needs on 1/7/2026. The current estimate of the required reserve for the next water year is 236 GL. This volume will be progressively reviewed and firmed over coming months.
- (10) Surplus (or deficit) of water available after accounting for all commitments.

Resource distribution as of 15 March 2026 NSW Murray Regulated River Water Source



NSW Murray and Lower Darling water balance - 15 March 2026



Notes:

- Water in storage: Active volumes of NSW share in Hume, Dartmouth, Menindee and Lake Victoria as of 28/02/2026.
- Reserve held behind Snowy, water in transit and trades: Includes snowy scheme contributions, drought reserve held in snowy, water in transit, and interstate trades.
- Budgeted inflows: NSW’s budget of future inflows is based on minimum inflow observed pre-2004. The future inflow also includes Snowy Hydro’s guaranteed inflows for the remaining water year, plus Murrumbidgee end of system flows, plus any inflow recession known to date.
- Inter-valley trade (IVT): Total tributary system water bought by Murray system users that is yet to be delivered. Murrumbidgee IVT balance is -2 GL as of 28/02/2026.
- Evaporation: Water set aside for evaporation for the remainder of the year. Generally, this reduces as the year progresses. Of the total evaporation, approximately 27 GL is attributed to Menindee Lakes.
- River losses upstream of SA: Water budgeted for transmission losses from the River Murray system upstream of the South Australian border for the remainder of the year. Generally, reduces as the water year progresses.
- SA non-dilution entitlement: Water to supply South Australia’s entitlement flow, as required under the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) Agreement in clause 88. Generally, reduces as water year progresses.
- SA dilution flow: Water to provide South Australia’s dilution and conveyance component of flow, as required under the MDB Agreement in clause 88A. Reduces as the year progresses. Note, may include the Additional Dilution Flow (ADF) when triggered.
- MDB Agreement required reserves: Includes the conveyance reserve to be set aside for use in the next water year, as required by the MDB Agreement in clause 102D.
- Other commitments: Includes Menindee commitments plus usage, any north-south active environmental water, and other trade adjustments, and the minimum reserve, required to be set aside for use in the next water year, as required by the MDB Agreement in clause 103.
- Water available for allocation: NSW’s bulk share of the resource that can be assigned to NSW Murray entitlement holders based on the Water Sharing Plan. Allocation of this volume is provided in the above table and pie chart.

Held environmental water (HEW)

Held environmental water entitlements are held and/or managed either singly or jointly by various environmental holder groups, including the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, The Living Murray and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder. The figures in the below table are approximate. For detailed information, please refer to the individual agency websites.

| Licence category | Share component (GL) | 2025–26 volume (GL)* | Account balance (GL) |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| High security | 39 | 29 | 5 |
| Conveyance | 50 | 29 | 9 |
| General security | 527 | 277 | 172 |

*Water allocated in 2025–26 plus water carried over on 1/7/2025

Inter-valley trade (IVT)

In the Murray, trade across the Barmah Choke remains restricted to ‘no net trade downstream’ . Downstream trade opens to the extent of the volume of any upstream trade. Water users are advised to monitor the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) website ([Barmah Choke trade rule | Murray–Darling Basin Authority](#)) for information about the trade balance and status of trade across the Barmah Choke.

Temporary trade between the Lower Darling and the Murray is open and will likely remain open until

the system next falls below 480 GL. Trade within the Lower Darling Regulated River Water Source also remains open.

Trade out of Murrumbidgee is open and trade into the Murrumbidgee is closed. The Murrumbidgee IVT account balance has been restored as at 13 March 2026, after a minor deficit supported continued deliveries to River Murray users and helped avert a likely shortfall during the late January extreme heatwave.

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 important information.

Allocations in 2025–26

Table 1: Water allocation history in 2025–26 for the NSW Murray Regulated River Water Source

| Date | Licence category | Increment | Total 2025–26 |
|--------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1-Jul | Domestic and stock | 100% | 100%* |
| 1-Jul | Local water utility | 100% | 100%* |
| 1-Jul | High security | 0.97 ML/unit share | 0.97 ML/unit share |
| 1-Jul | Conveyance | 0.5039 ML/unit share | 0.5039 ML/unit share |
| 1-Jul | General security | 0.01 ML/unit share | 0.01 ML/unit share |
| 1-Aug | Conveyance | 0.0039 ML/unit share | 0.5078 ML/unit share |
| 1-Aug | General security | 0.01 ML/unit share | 0.02 ML/unit share |
| 15-Aug | Conveyance | 0.0039 ML/unit share | 0.5117 ML/unit share |
| 15-Aug | General security | 0.01 ML/unit share | 0.03 ML/unit share |
| 1-Sep | Conveyance | 0.0078 ML/unit share | 0.5195 ML/unit share |
| 1-Sep | General security | 0.02 ML/unit share | 0.05 ML/unit share |
| 15-Sep | Conveyance | 0.0193 ML/unit share | 0.5388 ML/unit share |
| 15-Sep | General security | 0.05 ML/unit share | 0.10 ML/unit share |
| 1-Oct | Conveyance | 0.0311 ML/unit share | 0.5699 ML/unit share |
| 1-Oct | General security | 0.08 ML/unit share | 0.18 ML/unit share |
| 1-Nov | Conveyance | 0.0078 ML/unit share | 0.5777 ML/unit share |
| 1-Nov | General security | 0.02 ML/unit share | 0.20 ML/unit share |

*Maximum allowable

Table 2: Water allocation history in 2025–26 for the Lower Darling Regulated River Water Source

| Date | Licence category | Increment | Total 2025–26 |
|-------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1-Jul | Domestic and stock | 100% | 100%* |
| 1-Jul | Local water utility | 100% | 100%* |
| 1-Jul | High security | 1 ML/unit share | 1 ML/unit share* |
| 1-Jul | General security | 1 ML/unit share | 1 ML/unit share* |

* Maximum allowable

Outlook for 2026–27

A water availability outlook for the start of the next water year (1 July 2026) is provided below. The outlook is indicative only, not guaranteed, and should be used with caution, particularly when projecting many months ahead. Nevertheless, it aims to help water users with their end of year water management decisions.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2026 for the 2026–27 water year – Lower Darling

- The Menindee Lakes System is around 38% full, holding some 655 GL as of 13 March 2026.
- The Menindee resource is currently shared with other states, under the Murray Darling Basin Agreement, as the system is holding more than 480 GL.
- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for all higher priority entitlements in 2026–27, including local water utility, domestic and stock and high security access licences.
- We are closely monitoring the current resource conditions, and the indicative opening allocations for general security access licences will be reflected in future statements.
- Full allocations for supplementary access licences can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.

Indicative allocations on 1 July 2026 for the 2026–27 water year – NSW Murray

- Full (100%) allocation can be expected for local water utility and domestic and stock access licences, as well as sub-category high security entitlements.
- Allocation to high security (excluding sub-categories) generally opens at 97% of entitlement. We are assessing the current conditions closely.
- Conveyance is expected to be allocated in accordance with the plan rules.
- The average general security balance is currently 28%, though individual balances may vary. Individuals can carryover their closing balances up to 50% of their entitlement.

- The current assessment is predicting **no opening allocation** for general security water users. The allocation will be subject to inflow and losses to 30 June 2026 and any forfeiture of allocated water on 1 July 2026.
- The current Barmah-Millewa Environmental Water Allowance (BMEWA) account balance is approximately 172 GL, which is currently borrowed to support 2025–26 general security allocations. In accordance with the water sharing plan, the balance will remain fully borrowed on 1 July 2026, with resource improvements providing payback before general security allocations can exceed 30%.
- Full allocations for supplementary access licence holders can be expected and is available subject to announced periods of supplementary access.

Chances of improvement

The potential improvements in NSW Murray general security allocations will be reviewed in future statements as inflow conditions and system outlooks continue to be assessed. Based on the current resource levels and ongoing dry conditions, it is presently anticipated that no changes to general security allocations would occur before 1 November 2026 under a repeat of 90% historical inflow conditions.

River Murray weekly report (for the week ending 4 March 2026)

- Releases from the Menindee Lakes System continue to support demands in the lower Darling and the River Murray system whilst managing water quality risks at Weir 32
- System transfers to Lake Victoria ceased in response to recent rainfall and reduced demands.
- Delivery shortfall risk between Wakool Junction and SA border is currently negligible.
- The risk of system shortfall is currently negligible while shared resources remain in Menindee.
- The MDBA has released its end-October update to the Annual Operating Outlook: [River Murray System Annual Operating Outlook | Murray–Darling Basin Authority](#)

Water sharing plan rules (NSW Murray)

This statement includes plain language information on the plan rules relevant to water allocation below. This is based on our knowledge and understanding at the time of writing. Water users should verify the information as required before making any water management decision.

- Domestic and stock, local water utility, and high security sub-category access licences are to receive an allocation of 100% of their share component at the start of the water year. These licences cannot carry over unused balances into the next water year.

- High security access licences are to receive full allocation of 97% at the start of the water year and cannot carry over any unused balances into the next water year. If general security licences are allocated 97% or more, high security must be increased to 100% of their entitlement.
- Conveyance access licences receive an allocation of 50% after all higher priority categories have been fully allocated and cannot carry over any unused balances into the next water year. These licences are allocated incrementally based on GS allocations.
- General security access licences are to receive allocations after all higher priority categories have been fully allocated, and the conveyance licences have received their 50% allocation. GS accounts can carry over up to 50% of entitlement into the next water year and have a limit of 110% of entitlement.
- Planned environmental water allowances include the Barmah-Millewa Allowance, the Murray Additional Allowance, the River Murray Increased Flows.
- Supplementary water access licences are to receive an allocation of 100% of entitlement at the start of the water year, unless a growth-in-use measure is required. The closing balance cannot be carried over into the next water year.

Useful links

- Water allocation guide – We published a series of guides to describe the water allocation methods for most NSW regulated river systems. The guide for these water sources are available at the following link: [Resource assessment process | NSW Government Water](#)
- Water allocation statement – The water allocation statement for all water sources is available at the following link: [Water allocation statements | NSW Government Water](#)
- Water allocation dashboard – The dashboard on water availability and allocations for regulated river water sources is available at the following link: [Allocations dashboard | NSW Government Water](#)
- Water sharing plan – The water sharing plan for these water sources is available at the following link: [Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Murray and Lower Darling Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016](#)

Further information

The next water allocation statement for these water sources will be published on **Wednesday 1 April 2026 at 2:30 pm.**

Subscribe [here](#) to receive water allocation statements and email updates from Water Group of the department.

You can also follow the department on X: [@NSWDCCEEW_Water](#)

Contact information for water enquiries and other water-related matters can be found on the department's website: [Contact us - DCCEEW | Water](#)