

# Community update for Barwon-Darling, Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling-Baaka river

## Dissolved oxygen update

Dissolved oxygen (DO) results at Wilcannia are improving and above critical levels for fish health however DO levels at Nelia Gaari in the upper reaches of Lake Wetherell are still low and have been dropping below 2 mg/L. The critical level for when fish deaths can occur is 2 mg/L. Manual DO readings taken at surface level in Lake Wetherell are at a good level at above 4 mg/L as of Thursday 6 February. Water out of Lake Pamamaroo into the main weir is good quality with DO tracking mostly above 6 mg/L and DO remains good throughout most of the weir pool with readings above 4 mg/L.

Dissolved oxygen may be further impacted by low intensity heatwave conditions forecast for this weekend and continuing hot days and nights. Options are limited to prevent or mitigate water quality issues in Lake Wetherell; however, fish can take refuge in better quality water upstream.

## Update on releases

The Lake Pamamaroo inlet regulator was further opened with 900ML/day flowing in from Lake Wetherell as of 4 February. Flows are being maintained from Lake Pamamaroo outlet at 1200ML/day and 300ML/day at Menindee outlet.

The decision to increase flows through the Lake Pamamaroo inlet has been taken to help balance the lake levels and protect the inlet infrastructure until it can be repaired when water levels are low for an extended period. Increased flow into Lake Pamamaroo from Lake Wetherell will also help to maximise water held in Lake Pamamaroo for water security. It is likely in coming weeks that the flow rate through the Pamamaroo inlet regulator may increase to continuously manage the levels between the lakes.

With high temperatures persisting in the region, there is an ongoing risk to reduced dissolved oxygen in the water. NSW Government and Commonwealth agencies are continuing to carefully monitor the situation and adjusting releases as required to help prevent hypoxic conditions in the Menindee town weir pool upstream of Weir 32.

## Readiness to respond

Should a mass fish death occur, an incident response plan is in place and a contractor is on standby for clean up if required.

## WaterNSW Operations Update

Recent rainfall in the northern Murray-Darling Basin has increased flows into the Barwon-Darling Rivers, with around 340 GL reaching Menindee Lakes since mid-December 2024. However, inflows are expected to decline over the next month, with an additional 25–35 GL likely by March 2025 if no further rain falls. The peak flow at Wilcannia was recorded at 16,000 ML/d on 2 January. To manage water movement and structural constraints, the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator has been opened, and flow adjustments will continue to maintain water quality and efficiency.

Water forecasts are based on the best available data but may change due to varying conditions. WaterNSW will provide ongoing updates, with operations at Menindee Lakes guided by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and partner agencies. For the latest information, visit the WaterNSW Water Insights portal and sign up for alerts.

## Community afternoon tea hosted by the EPA

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is hosting a community drop-in session on 19 February in Menindee to provide an update on the emergency management plan they are developing to respond to mass fish death events.

Join them for afternoon tea and have a yarn about how you'd like for the EPA to communicate with you and what information you'd like to know in the event of a mass fish death event. They are also keen to hear about your previous experiences of mass fish death events and your thoughts on the clean-up process.

### Details:

**Time:** 3-5pm Wednesday 19 February 2025

**Location:** Menindee CWA Hall

**Catering:** Afternoon tea will be supplied

## Upcoming agency trips to the area

Below is a table outlining the dates and times our agencies will be visiting Menindee and the surrounding areas. Each agency will provide notice to the community if needed.

Agency	When	Reason for visit / Activity	Location
The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	10-14 Feb	Water monitoring	Darling River from Wilcannia to Pooncarie
Environment Protection Authority	19 Feb	Discussion with community on Draft Menindee Mass Fish Death Event Sub Plan	Menindee

## Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: [water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dpie.nsw.gov.au)
- To view community updates issued, visit [Community updates and frequently asked questions | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW DPI Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: <https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet>
- Information on recent fish deaths is available at: [Fish kills in NSW](#). When reporting, please include the name of the river/waterbody, location and date of your observation and provide photographs. If possible, please also record what species are affected and an estimate of number of each species observed.
- Further information on blackwater events can be found at the DCCEEW Water website at: [Hypoxic blackwater | Water \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority website at: <https://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths>  
<https://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes>
- WaterNSW operational updates are available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: <https://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill>
- Real-time water quality data from DCCEEW-BCS monitoring buoys can be accessed from the [Darling-Baaka River Health Project dashboard](#).
- WaterNSW buoy data can be found here <https://waterinsights.waternsw.com.au/12104-lower-darling-regulated-river/river-data>