

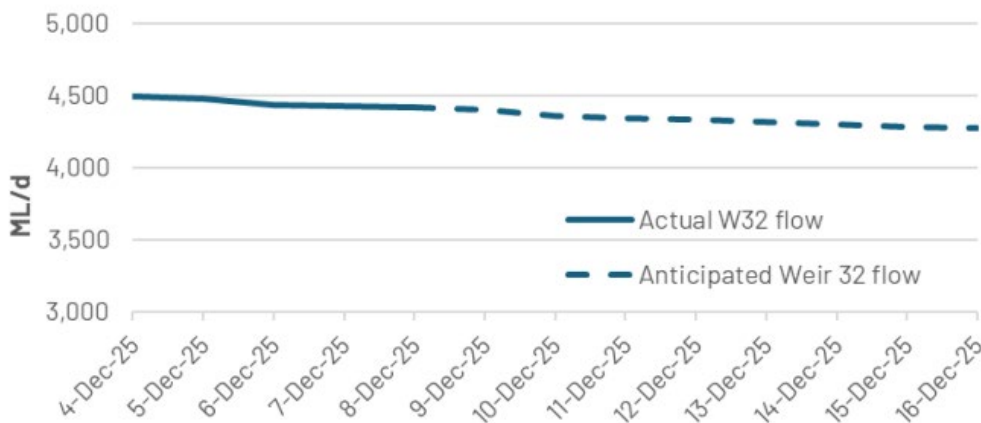
# Community update for Barwon–Darling, Menindee Lakes and Lower Darling–Baaka river

## Current conditions

Community should be aware of gradually declining flows over Weir 32 that is in response to the current release strategy for the Menindee Lakes. There will be a steady decline in flow over coming weeks as the Lake Menindee Outlet sees reduced releases due to the lake level falling.

Following this week's Menindee/ Lower Darling Water Quality Working Groups meeting, the decision was made to reduce Lake Wetherell releases from 800 ML/day to 750 ML/day. This decision was made with advice from an independent expert, input from water agencies and after feedback from community. This adjustment was done with the intention to preserve water resource in the upper lakes leading into the warmer months, while ensuring water quality in the weir pool remains at safe levels for fish health. WaterNSW is advising the community to expect to see flow at Weir 32 fall to 4,350 ML/day which will reduce the water level at Weir 32 to around 2.25 metres (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Forecast hydrograph for Weir 32 (subject to change)



Water quality within the Menindee weir pool is currently good with the department continuing to closely monitor any changes and ready to alter the release strategy if required. The department and WaterNSW continue to monitor the multi-depth monitoring pontoons in the Menindee area that measure key parameters such as temperature, dissolved oxygen and turbidity.

Menindee Lakes currently holds **1,166 GL (66.3%** of the total capacity). Inflows to the Lakes are receding so expect to see Lake Wetherell levels reduce moving forward unless there are more rain events in the northern Basin.

There are no significant inflows forecast and updated forecasting indicates that a further 20–40 GL is expected to enter the Menindee Lakes to the end of December. As of 10 December, flows at Wilcannia have fallen to 591 ML/day and at Bourke flows have reduced to 477 ML/day.

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## Menindee Webinar – 11 December (tomorrow)

The department is hosting an online webinar tomorrow, Thursday 11 December, from 4-5 pm for the community to hear from water agencies about how water in the Menindee Lakes is currently being managed and what we are doing to reduce the risk of fish deaths in the Menindee weir pool during the high-risk summer period.

It will also be an opportunity for community to ask questions regarding lake releases, future scenarios and work that is being done in the area.

To register please click [here](#) or visit [water.nsw.gov.au/menindee-updates](http://water.nsw.gov.au/menindee-updates)

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## Great Darling Anabranh – Cawndilla Releases

You may have noticed an environmental flow has started being delivered down the Great Darling Anabranh from Lake Cawndilla. The 700 ML/day flow will reconnect the Anabranh to the Murray, freshening refuge pools and providing opportunities for native fish to move downstream from the Menindee Lakes. It will also provide environmental outcomes for native vegetation, waterbirds and aquatic fauna such as yabbies, rakali and turtles.

Environmental outcomes will be monitored via the CEWH's FlowMER Program.

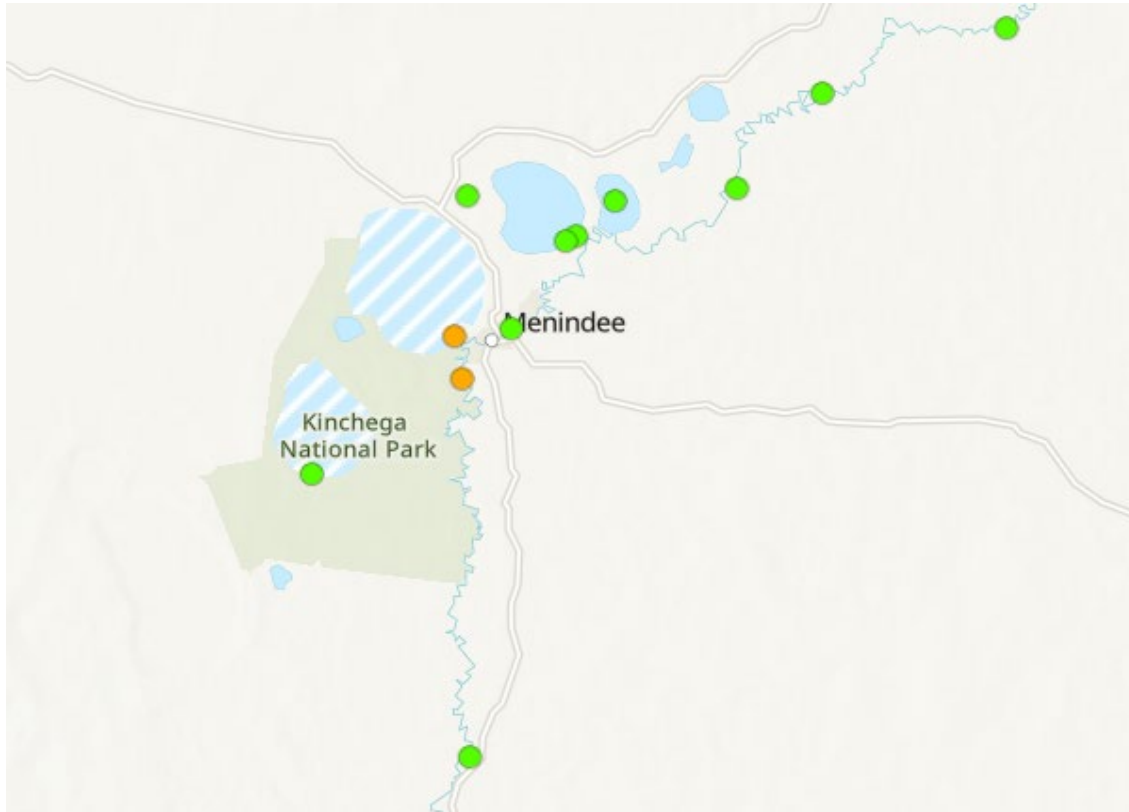
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## Algae Alerts

Following water sampling last month, WaterNSW is reporting an amber alert for blue-green algae for both Lake Menindee and Weir 32. There are also green alerts across the region as shown in Figure 2. **Green** alert levels for blue-green algae mean it is present in the water but does not pose a threat to recreational, stock or domestic use.

At **amber** level, the algae are multiplying, and the water often has a green tinge. While the water remains suitable for recreational use, it is considered unsuitable for potable use and raw water should be treated prior to domestic use. The water may also be unsuitable for stock watering. Water users should use caution and avoid water where signs of blue-green algae are present.

Figure 2. WaterNSW Algal Alerts – Menindee Region



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## Christmas period

As the Christmas and New Year period have proven to be high risk periods for water quality issues and fish deaths in the past, we want to assure community the department remains alert and will continue to monitor over the holiday season.

The Menindee/Lower Darling Water Quality Working Group will continue to meet weekly, or more regularly if needed, and the department is making sure water agencies have staff ready to respond to matters that arise.

Kate McBride, your local water contact, will be available if there are any issues on ground and the hotline for reporting fish deaths is at the end of the document.

You can contact Kate at 0458 945 149 or at [kate.mcbride@dcceew.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kate.mcbride@dcceew.nsw.gov.au)

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## Additional information

- To notify the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water of potential blackwater events email: [water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au](mailto:water.enquiries@dcceew.nsw.gov.au)
- To view community updates issued, visit [water.nsw.gov.au/menindee-updates](http://water.nsw.gov.au/menindee-updates)
- If you've got any questions regarding this update or other water matters **contact your local implementation officer, Kate McBride on 0458 945 149** or [kate.mcbride@dcceew.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kate.mcbride@dcceew.nsw.gov.au)
- To report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface, or crayfish leaving the water please call the **NSW Department of Primary Industry Fisheries Phonenumber 1800 043 536** or fill in a fish kill protocol and report form at: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills-2019-2020/info-sheet](http://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 department's website at: [water.nsw.gov.au/hypoxic-blackwater](http://water.nsw.gov.au/hypoxic-blackwater)
- Additional information is also available on the Murray–Darling Basin Authority website at: [www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths](http://www.mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths)  
[www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes](http://www.mdba.gov.au/water-management/infrastructure/menindee-lakes)
- WaterNSW operational updates are available in [WaterInsights](#)
- Water quality data collected after the fish deaths at Menindee is available on the Environment Protection Authority web page at: [www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill](http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/working-together/community-engagement/updates-on-issues/menindee-fish-kill)
- Real-time water quality data from The department – Strategic Science & Engagement monitoring buoys can be accessed from the [Darling–Baaka River Health Project dashboard](#)
- Data from the WaterNSW gauging network can be found in WaterInsights at: <https://waterinsights.waternsw.com.au/12104-lower-darling-regulated-river/river-data>