

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

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## Fish Deaths

Following small scale fish deaths near the Lake Menindee outlet last week, further deaths have been confirmed in Lake Menindee near Sunset Strip. NSW DPIRD-Fisheries have undertaken on-ground observations following reports from the local community, confirming hundreds of thousands of fish estimated to be impacted, the majority being Bony Herring.

Agencies are looking at the possibility that the weekend's cool change, and the subsequent drop in air and water temperature contributing to the cause of the deaths, with prevailing winds pushing them onto the shore. Bony Herring are an important totemic native fish species for the Barkandji community and can breed in large numbers in suitable conditions but are susceptible to sudden changes in water and air temperature.

At this stage, the dead fish are not posing a risk to water quality, but this will continue to be monitored. The Barkandji Rangers have commenced clean-up of the Bony Herring. The EPA is working with the Central Darling Shire Council and the Barkandji Rangers to support clean-up to minimise odour impacts on the community.

Unfortunately, there was no direct action that could have been taken in Lake Menindee to prevent this fish death event. However, we have been able to take action within the Weir 32 weir pool (see update below).

Fisheries are urging community to **report dead fish, fish struggling or gasping at the water surface** by calling the NSW DPIRD Fisheries Phonenumber on **1800 043 536**. Noting the location of the dead fish and suspected species is also important.

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## Saturdays Pulse flow

On Saturday 31 January multi-depth monitoring equipment showed oxygen levels within the Menindee town weir pool had deteriorated and the forecast dissolved oxygen (DO) at mixing would fall below 3.5 mg/L. This meant the DO level that agencies have for initiating a pulse flow had been triggered. In response, a 1,500 ML/day pulse was released from Lake Pamamaroo for 24 hours to break up the persistent stratification and increase oxygen levels within the weir pool. Figure 1 shows the increase in the river level as Pamamaroo releases increased. first released.

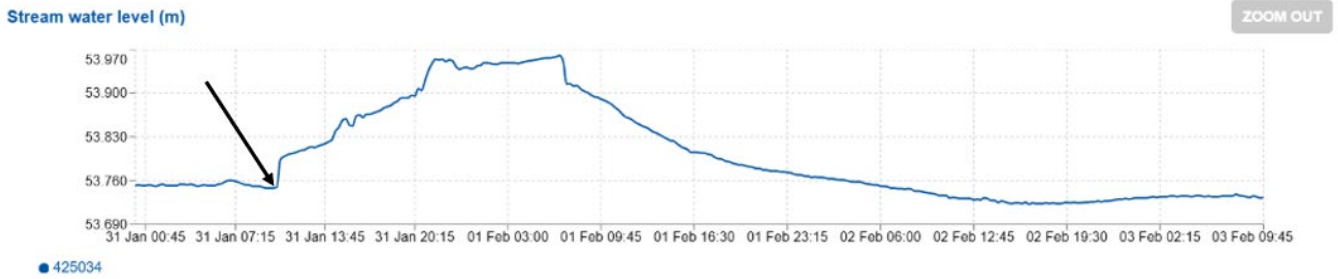


Figure 1: Stream water level at Downstream Main Weir site (31 Jan- 3 Feb)

Figure 2 shows slightly improved DO with the initial increase in river level and then improved rapidly once the higher flow and cooler air temperatures arrived. This allowed turnover to occur at midnight when there was more oxygen in the system, rather than in the morning when DO levels would be at their lowest due to algal activity. The weir pool has continued to remain well mixed, aided by the cooler temperatures.

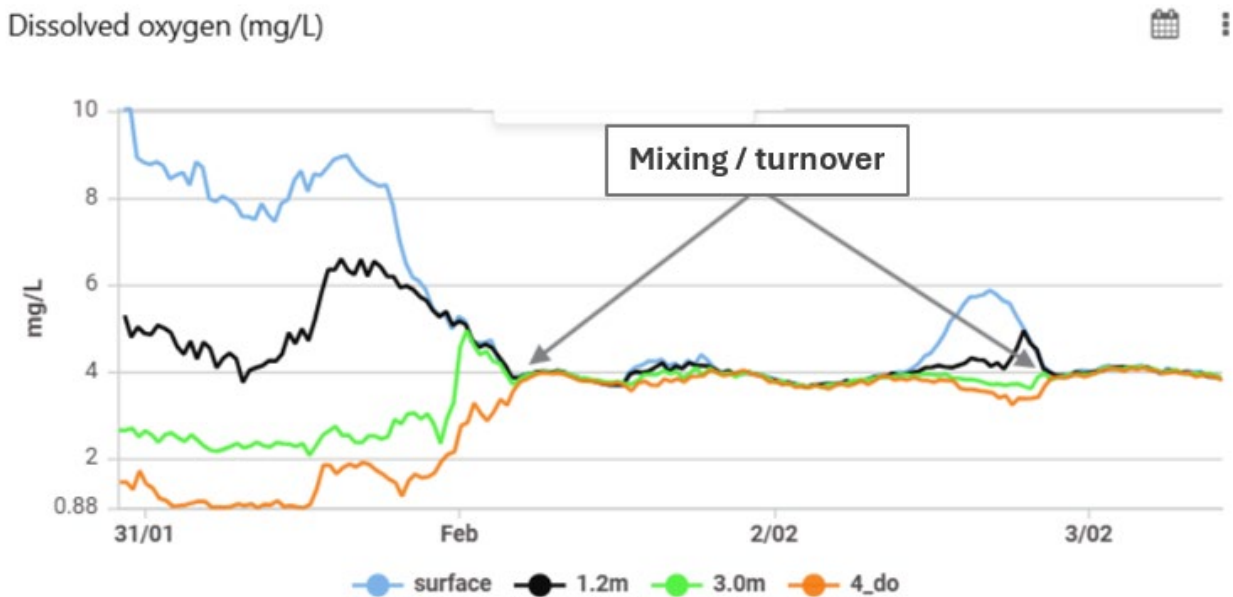


Figure 1. DO profile at Menindee Town buoy (31 Jan- 3 Feb) showing impact of pulse release and resulting turnover event.

## Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator opening

WaterNSW will open Pamamaroo inlet regulator today to move water off the Wetherell floodplain and into Lake Pamamaroo. Lake Wetherell currently sits at 60.09m (AHD), and water will return to be within channel when this reduces to 59.8m. This action aims to conserve water by reducing evaporation and avoid deteriorating water quality on the floodplains.

Water will move into Lake Pamamaroo over a matter of weeks at a rate of 1000-2000 ML/day to avoid unnecessarily impacting adjoining landholders. Landholders along Lake Wetherell are advised to monitor stock along the water course.

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## Inflows

WaterNSW released an inflow forecast on 15 January 2026, indicating a further 15–25 GL is expected to enter the Menindee Lakes to the end of February. Flow from the northern Basin has been relatively low over the past month. A portion of that inflow is protected environmental water. Flows past Wilcannia are continuing to decrease, currently at 43 ML/day while flows at Bourke have also decreased to 564 ML/day.

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## Upcoming agency trips to the area

The table below outlines the dates and times that agencies will be visiting Menindee and the surrounding areas or holding events. Each agency will notify the community if needed.

### Murray Darling Basin Authority: webinars next week

Register now for a series of webinars to hear from experts and ask your questions on a range of topics. Anyone can make a submission during the consultation period. It kicks off soon when we release a Discussion Paper with all the details.

- **Monday 9 February, 10am-11.30am (AEDT):** Discussion Paper overview and how to make a submission.
- **Thursday 12 February, 1pm-2pm (AEDT):** Health of Menindee Lakes, Menindee Review, and Basin Plan Review.
- **Friday 13 February, 10am-11am (AEDT):** Initial Sustainable Diversion Limits (SDL) Assessments.

Register for any or all of these webinars now to start preparing your submission and shape the future of the Basin: [https://assets-ocm.mkt.dynamics.com/18c6513d-1927-4d09-8c8e-8974068ea7ab/digitalassets/standaloneforms/b9386aa7-c9de-f011-8544-6045bdc26750?readableEventId=MDBA\\_Webinar\\_1\\_Discussion\\_Paper243542520](https://assets-ocm.mkt.dynamics.com/18c6513d-1927-4d09-8c8e-8974068ea7ab/digitalassets/standaloneforms/b9386aa7-c9de-f011-8544-6045bdc26750?readableEventId=MDBA_Webinar_1_Discussion_Paper243542520)



### Temporary Tube Fishway Trial

#### End of Season 2 Community Day



Join us for a free BBQ with a fun and informative day out on Country!

- Fishheart demonstration:** Get a behind-the-scenes look in the control room
- Info stands & displays:** Learn more about the project and the health of the Baaka!
- Community art installation:** Help us paint the pipes!



**When:** Saturday 14 March 2026 | 10 AM – 3 PM

**Where:** Lake Wetherell Outlet Regulator (Main Weir Road)





Agency	When	Reason for visit / Activity	Location
MDBA	Thursday, 12 February 1pm	Webinar: Health of Menindee Lakes, Menindee Review and Basin Plan Review	Webinar online (Registration link above)
NSW DPIRD Fisheries	Saturday 14 March, 10am-3pm	Community Open day – Temporary tube fishway trial (Fishheart)	Lake Wetherell Outlet Regulator
NSW DPIRD Fisheries	Week of 9-14 March	Engagement with local community on the Menindee & Lower Baaka Permanent Fish Passage Business Case	Menindee (various throughout the week).

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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>