

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

Update from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

Environmental water holders have decided to deliver a baseflow of 400 ML/day at Weir 32 over winter. This flow will include 200 ML/day of environmental flows in addition to 200 ML/day of minimum baseflows.

This decision responds to critical environmental needs in the Lower Darling/Baaka River and is based on the best available science, including the NSW Long-Term Watering Plan. It also takes into account water availability and the need to protect the Menindee Lakes drought reserve. We've done this by carefully considering the criticality of the flow to support juvenile native fish and prioritising it over other potential uses of water (no autumn fresh was delivered, and – if conditions remain dry – environmental flows in spring may be lower than they have been in the last five years), obtaining up-to-date scientific input and obtaining modelling on the interaction of the proposed winter flow and the Menindee Lakes storage.

Recent surveys found a range of native fish, including:

- Murray cod (nationally threatened), including juveniles
- Golden perch, including juveniles
- Silver perch (nationally endangered)
- Spangled perch

Experts recommend a 400 ML/day “recovery baseflow” to:

- Help young fish survive by improving access to food and shelter from predation (e.g. additional benches and snags)
- Improve river habitat
- Keep the river connected so fish can move freely

Environmental water holders recognise community concerns, especially in dry conditions, and have carefully balanced current needs with future water availability. Supporting young fish through winter is critical to rebuilding populations following past fish deaths and poor water quality.

The water being used is additional environmental water from the northern Basin, which would otherwise have been used upstream and not reached Menindee Lakes.

For further information, please see detailed scientific advice on the CEWH's website: [Latest water use – lower Darling / Baaka region - DCCEEW](#).

You can also contact the CEWH for further information via email at: ewater@dcceew.gov.au.



Figure 1 Fish monitoring in the lower Darling/Baaka in May 2026 has found Murray cod (young-of-year on left and adult on right). Photo credit: NSW DPIRD Fisheries.

Current water releases and inflow forecast

Flows from Lake Pamamaroo will remain unchanged at 250 ML/day until the environmental releases begin which is expected either this week or next week. Lake Menindee Outlet will remain fully open and is currently passing ~20ML/day into the weir pool. There is significant algal activity at a number of local sites, and the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator remains closed to manage water quality conditions within the upper lakes. Please see updated algal alerts for the region below.

The most recent inflow forecast from 6 May indicates only a further 10-15 GL is expected to reach Menindee Lakes by the end of June. At this stage there are no further significant flows identified across the Barwon-Darling Catchment. Upstream, flows continue to recede with Wilcannia discharging 441 ML/day and 258 ML/day passing Bourke.

Temporary Water Restrictions in the northern Basin – update

Last month, temporary water restrictions were implemented in the Barwon-Darling and northern tributaries to provide protection of flows to reduce the risk of critical water shortages in the Lower Darling. The restrictions were put in place following the upper Menindee Lakes (Pamamaroo, Wetherell, Tandure and Copi Hollow) falling below 250 GL active storage.

Due to recent inflows, the active storage in the upper lakes has increased to 257 GL. This means that the temporary water restrictions have been temporarily lifted while the upper lakes remain above 250 GL trigger level. You can find the announcement here: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#).

Once the upper lakes fall below 250 GL, the restrictions will be reinstated.

The combined active storage of the upper lakes (see below) is updated daily and available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#).

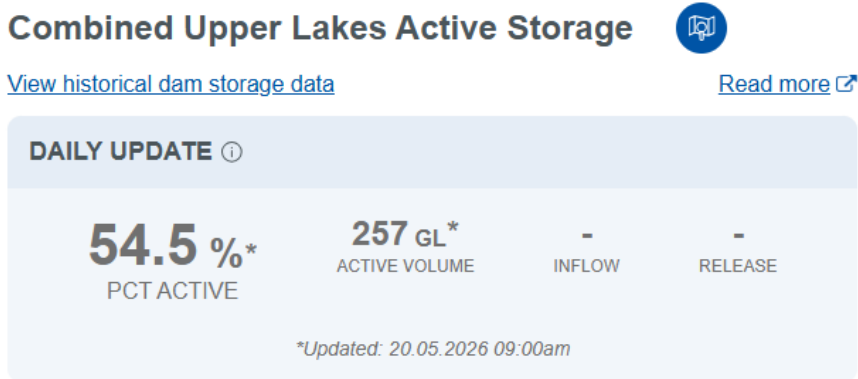


Figure 2 Screenshot of Combined Upper Lakes Active Storage from the WaterInsights page.

While the restrictions are temporarily lifted, water sharing plan rules remain in place.

For more information see our website: [Temporary water restrictions | Water](#)

Essential Water – Menindee Water Treatment Plant

Essential Water is responding to an electrical fault at the Menindee Water Treatment Plant, causing intermittent disruptions to some plant operations.

The plant remains operational, with crews and specialist technicians onsite progressing repairs. There is currently no impact to customer water supply, and Essential Water continue to closely monitor system performance.

Further updates will be provided if required.

Algae alerts

RED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunset Strip, Lake Menindee, Lake Menindee Outlet and Darling River at Weir 32 • Louth • Tolarno, Pooncarie, Burtundy and Ellerslie
AMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copi Hollow, Lake Cawndilla Outlet, Lake Pamamaroo Outlet and all Lake Wetherell sites, including Lake Tandure • Darling River Pumping Station (Menindee Town) • Tapio and Silver City Highway (Great Darling Anabranh) • Wilcannia
GREEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Pamamaroo centre

Note/s:

- Sites currently on **RED** alert will continue to be sampled weekly by WaterNSW (excluding Louth).
- WaterNSW is advising Lower Darling landholders to be alert to the presence blue-green algae (BGA) at red alert sites.
- Bold indicates a change since our last community update (May 11).
- Local residents and landholders are encouraged to sign up to the WaterNSW [WaterInsights](#) portal for automated BGA notifications, or monitor the [WaterNSW Algae Alerts Map](#).

More 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
- To view community updates issued, visit water.dcceew.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
- 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
- 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](#).
- 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
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
- 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.watarnsw.com.au/12104-lower-darling-regulated-river/river-data>