

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

Environmental Water Holder Update

Environmental water is continuing to be delivered for 400 ML/day winter baseflows (200 ML/day in addition to the 200 ML/day required minimum flows). These flows are a critical environmental priority to:

- protect native fish populations (especially over-winter survival of juvenile Murray cod and golden perch), by providing additional shelter, habitat and food resources for small fish
- support and overall river health.

More detail about the current flow is available here: [Winter baseflows in the lower Darling Baaka - Ecological justification](#).

The environmental water being used has been protected from the Northern Basin – this environmental water is additional water, that would have previously been extracted upstream and not made it to the Menindee Lakes. At the same time, additional environmental water from the Basin's north has been continuing to contribute to flows into the Menindee Lakes over winter until late July 2026.

As spring approaches, environmental water managers are continuing to balance immediate ecological needs with future water availability, recognising the concerns of the community particularly as conditions dry. Having some water available for supporting the lower Darling/Baaka over summer is important. However, native fish recovery and resilience to drier conditions also requires the support of environmental water through spring 2026. Considering environmental needs, water storage levels and drying conditions in the north, the CEWH and The Living Murray are planning a reduced flow of 300 ML/day as we move into spring (100 ML/day in addition to 200 ML/day required minimum flows in September and October, and no addition to 300 ML/day minimum flows in November). This flow rate represents the lowest of the 'baseflows' identified in the NSW [Murray-Lower Darling Long Term Water Plan](#). The minimum baseflow in the plan is based on scientific evidence and is expected to:

- support survival and condition of native fish, including juvenile Murray cod and golden perch that bred in 2025
- maintain river connectivity
- maintain refuge habitat

- support aquatic plants and food webs
- promote movement and mixing of water to support water quality (dissolved oxygen, salinity and algae), noting a higher flow rate may be required later in spring to manage water quality
- low-level breeding of native fish is possible, but has not been prioritised in choosing a flow rate of only 300 ML/day

Further information is available on the CEWH website: [Latest water use – lower Darling / Baaka region - DCCEEW](#). You can also contact the CEWH's Local Engagement Officer (Mildura-based) Tim Field, on 0488 753 397 or Tim.Field@dcceew.gov.au

Current conditions

Cooler air and water temperatures are resulting in a decrease in algal activity across the Menindee Lakes. Despite this, amber alerts for blue green algae remain at many local sites. Please see updated algal alerts for the region below.

The most recent [inflow forecast from August 6](#), indicated a further 5-10 GL is expected to reach Menindee Lakes to the end of September. The Northern Catchment has been relatively dry of late, with minimal rainfall. As such, flows from northern tributaries are currently low. Upstream, flows are decreasing at Wilcannia, which is currently discharging 282 ML/day, and Bourke is discharging 287 ML/day.

Menindee Lakes currently hold 531 GL (~31 % of the total capacity), however 209 GL remains in Lake Cawndilla and is undeliverable to the Lower Darling. Lake Menindee Outlet is currently maximised however the lake level is nearing a point where outflows may soon cease.

Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator

On Monday (3 August) WaterNSW opened the Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator (PIR) to move water from Lake Wetherell to Lake Pamamaroo. The aim is to remove water off the Lake Wetherell floodplain before the weather starts to warm up, which is the most efficient storage option for the water remaining in the upper lakes. The transfer of water will be undertaken at low flow rates and expected to occur over several weeks.

From the satellite images taken over recent months as the water level in Lake Pamamaroo receded, it appears that sediment has built up on the Lake Pamamaroo side of the inlet to form a hook shaped bank. The satellite image from 5 August, after the Pamamaroo inlet was opened, shows this bank is preventing the discharge through the inlet from flowing straight out and mixing with the water in Lake Pamamaroo. Instead, the water from Lake Wetherell is sitting close to the inlet and short

circuiting through the Lake Pamamaroo outlet. This has resulted in a change in some water quality parameters in the weir pool that may be noticeable to residents.

Following input from Menindee community members, the feasibility and timing for reinstalling the fish baffles between Lake Wetherell and Lake Pamamaroo is being assessed to allow for increased fish movement into Lake Wetherell and the northern Basin.

Figure 1. Satellite image of the Pamamaroo inlet regulator highlighting the location of the hook shaped sediment bank and the water from Lake Wetherell not dispersing into the lake – 5 August 2026



Menindee SDLAM project

The Basin Officials Committee has approved the withdrawal of the Menindee Lakes Water Savings Project from the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) measures framework. The NSW Government recognises the original scope of the project, particularly the reconfiguration of infrastructure to generate evaporative water savings, was not supported by the Menindee community. The NSW Government will not be revisiting the Menindee Lakes Water Savings Project.

Algae alerts

RED	• Ellerslie
AMBER	• Copi Hollow, Lake Pamamaroo Outlet and all Lake Wetherell sites, including Lake Tandure • Darling River at Weir 32 • Pooncarie, Tapio, Tolarno and Burtundy • Lake Menindee Outlet and Lake Cawndilla Outlet • Wilcannia
GREEN	• Sunset Strip, Darling River Pumping Station (Menindee Town)

- Bold indicates a change since our last community update.
- Residents and landholders are encouraged to sign up to the WaterNSW WaterInsights portal for automated BGA notifications or monitor the WaterNSW Algae Alerts Map.

H5 Avian Influenza (bird flu)

New South Wales is responding to 2 confirmed detections of H5 bird flu. Both cases have been giant petrels found in the Mid-North Coast region. This strain of avian influenza has had significant impacts overseas, causing widespread mortality in poultry, wild birds and some mammals.

It is important that we all continue to remain vigilant and report any sick or dead poultry, wild birds or wildlife.

If you see sick or dead birds or other animals, do not touch them. For more information, please visit nsw.gov.au/emergency/h5-bird-flu

What do you do if you suspect avian influenza?

If you observe any unusual signs of disease or abnormal behaviour consistent with H5 Avian influenza symptoms:

- **AVOID** contact with sick or dead animals
- **RECORD** time, date, location and other evidence i.e. photos, video.
- **REPORT** mass bird mortalities (five or more) via:
 - the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline (EAD Hotline) on 1800 675 888
 - **this form to report sick or dead birds.**

What you should report to us:

Sick or dead birds of any species, including seabirds, wild birds, backyard poultry or pet birds, anywhere in NSW.

What to expect following a report:

When you make a report, an officer from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will review your report. Depending on the outcome of a risk assessment, you may receive a follow-up phone call for more information. In some cases, birds may be collected and tested for H5 bird flu or other causes of death, though **not all wild birds will be collected if the risk is assessed as low.**

Your wellbeing

Emergency responses or the threat of incursions can be stressful and may impact people's mental and emotional wellbeing. You may want to contact these supports if you are worried about your own or someone else's mental health:

- Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511
- 13YARN (24/7): 13 92 76
- Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636
- Brother to Brother (24/7) 1800 435 799
- Lifeline: 131 114
- Kids Help Line: 1800 551 800
- MensLine: 1300 78 99 78

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: 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: mdba.gov.au/climate-and-river-health/water-quality/fish-deaths 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: 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: waterinsights.watarnsw.com.au/12104-lower-darling-regulated-river/river-data