

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

Lake Cawndilla fish kill

The NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) – Fisheries have received reports of a fish kill event at Lake Cawndilla, Menindee on 25 August 2026. It is estimated that hundreds of fish have been impacted, with Bony Herring the only species reported.

The likely cause is low lake levels and poor water quality influenced by recent rain events and a drop in temperatures. NSW Government agencies will continue to monitor the situation.

The community is encouraged to report fish kills to the Fishers Water Phonenumber on 1800 043 536.

For more information on fish kills visit: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills

Current conditions

Menindee Lakes currently holds 545 GL, with 212 GL stored in Lake Cawndilla that is undeliverable to the Lower Darling. The most recent [inflow forecast, dated 6 August](#), indicated a further 5–10 GL is expected to reach Menindee Lakes to the end of September.

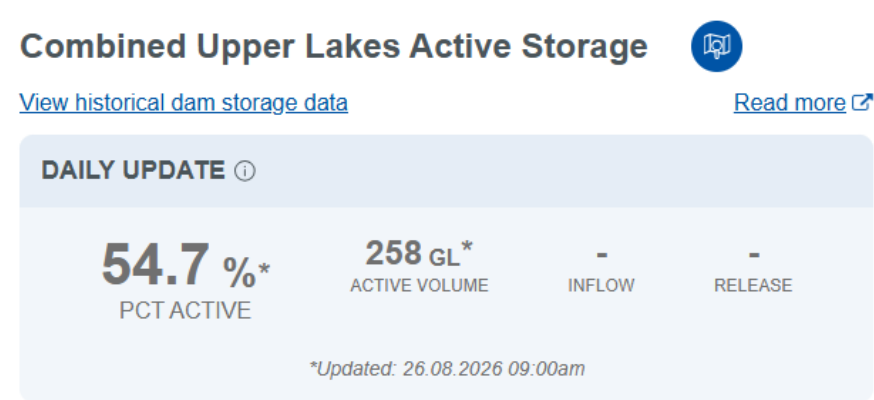
The Northern Catchment has been dry of late, with minimal rainfall. As such, flows from northern tributaries are currently low. Upstream, flows are decreasing at Wilcannia, which is currently discharging 249 ML/day, and Bourke is discharging 254 ML/day.

Temporary water restrictions in the northern Basin

In April, 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. These restrictions are in addition to those that are in water sharing plans.

With the upper lakes active storage currently at 258 GL, the restrictions remain temporarily lifted. Once the upper lakes fall below 250 GL active storage, which is expected in coming weeks, the restrictions will be reinstated immediately. The combined active storage of the upper lakes (Figure 1) is updated daily and available at: [WaterInsights - WaterNSW](#).

Figure 1. Combined Upper Lakes Active Storage data screenshot from the WaterInsights page at 9 am, 25/08/2026



Fish baffles — Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator

Temporary fish passage is being facilitated between lakes Pamamaroo and Wetherell through the reinstallation of a temporary fish ladder (vertical slot baffles, Figure 2). Advice from the local community was instrumental in making this happen and we would like to recognise the commitment from various water agencies to facilitate a positive outcome.

Allowing fish passage between the lakes and into the Northern Basin is important for breeding and population distribution of large-bodied native fish such as Golden Perch and Murray Cod, also known as flow specialists.

During the baffles last installation, in September 2025 hundreds of Golden Perch moved through the baffles during the 4 x 3-hour trapping windows sampled. For more information: [Pamamaroo inlet regulator temporary fishway trapping results and recommendations, September 2025](#).

Figure 2. Fish baffles being installed at Pamamaroo Inlet Regulator – August 2026



Temporary Tube Fishway Trial — Fisheries update

The season 2 report card was released on Fisheries socials yesterday ([Fishheart Year 2 Report Card](#)). Results showed 27,621* fish migrated through the Fishheart unit in Year 2, allowing them to move upstream to find new habitat, more food, breed and recruit in the Baaka and beyond. This takes the combined total number of fish moved (including Year 1) to more than 34,000 fish.

Season 3 is well underway with a deployment schedule being finalised, aiming to commence works next week. The current target date for the Fishheart unit being back in the Baaka is 3 September 2026, noting this is subject to final confirmation and local conditions. Installation needs will be assessed during the week and any operational requirements discussed with WaterNSW and river operations as the date gets closer.

**Counts remain subject to ongoing Quality Assurance/ Quality Control.*

Menindee Lakes to be surveyed

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), in partnership with the NSW Government, has initiated a new survey of the Menindee Lakes System to obtain current, accurate data on lake capacity and how the system has changed over time.

The work will update the previous survey of lake capacity conducted in 2003, including the volume of water below outlets that cannot be released downstream — often referred to as inactive or dead storage.

Joe Davis of the MDBA said: “This work will map the shape and depth of the lakebeds, show how water moves through the system and help us understand how sediment may have changed over time”.

SA Water will be contracted to carry out the work using specialist surveying equipment starting with Lake Pamamaroo in early September. Results from the surveys will be used by NSW agencies and the MDBA to make any adjustments to lake storage volumes, and will be publicly available once the work is complete.

Lake Cawndilla pelican deaths

Investigations and laboratory testing of samples from dead pelican chicks and juveniles found at Lake Cawndilla on 7 August 2026 found **no evidence of H5 bird flu**, with all samples testing negative. The cause of the deaths continues to be investigated.

H5N1 Avian influenza (H5 bird flu)

NSW has had 14 events of H5 bird flu, including one in Wentworth. Public reporting is a critical part of the response and supporting ongoing detection efforts.

If you see sick or dead wild birds, domestic birds, marine mammals or other wildlife showing signs of H5 bird flu:

- **Avoid** contact — do not touch them
- **Record** what you see
- **Report** it via the [online form](#) or the Emergency Animal Disease Hotline, 1800 675 888

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

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

Algae alerts

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

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 Phoneline 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