

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

Current conditions

Menindee Lakes currently holds 500 GL, with 180 GL stored in Lake Cawndilla that is undeliverable to the Lower Darling. The most recent [inflow forecast, dated 14 September](#), indicates that only a further 4-8 GL is expected to reach Menindee Lakes to the end of October.

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 118 ML/day, and Bourke is discharging 130 ML/day.

Water restrictions in the northern Basin to be reinstated

In April, temporary water restrictions were implemented in the Barwon–Darling and northern tributaries to provide protection of inflows 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. The restrictions were temporarily lifted in May due to inflows raising active storage above the 250 GL trigger.

The upper Menindee Lakes are forecast to fall below 250 GL active storage this weekend, at which point the restrictions will be reinstated.

With dry conditions and minimal inflows continuing, protecting water supply for critical human and environmental needs is a key priority. Given current conditions, it is unlikely that the restrictions will have a practical impact at this time but will do so if there are significant rain events in the northern Basin. The overarching aim of the restriction is to ensure that critical needs (town water supply, basic landholder rights, domestic and stock, and environmental needs) are met if there are inflows following an extended dry period in the Lower Darling.

The 250 GL upper lakes active storage level is also used as a guidance trigger for transitioning the Lower Darling to drought stage 2 (emerging drought or water shortage). Further information on drought stages is [available here](#).

The combined active storage of the upper lakes (Figure 1) is updated daily and available at: [WaterInsights – WaterNSW](#).

Combined Upper Lakes Active Storage



[View historical dam storage data](#)

[Read more](#)

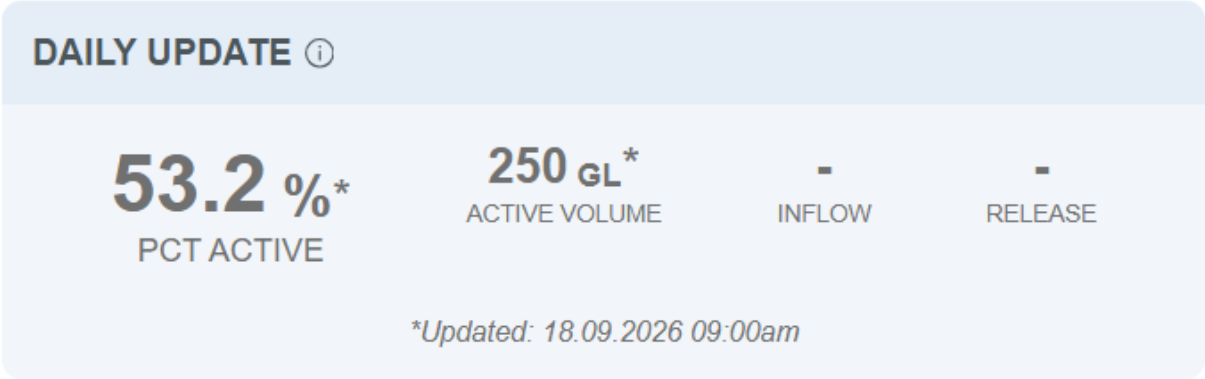


Figure 1. Combined Upper Lakes Active Storage data screenshot from WaterInsights

Temporary Tube Fishway Trial — Fisheries update

Season 3 of the trial has commenced with the Fishheart unit back in the Baaka and operational for just over a week now. The off season was again used to make adjustments based on lessons learned during Season 2, including with the unit’s attraction flows and guiding systems.

Early results are promising given the current low flows in the river, with over 1,000 fish moved in the first week. Bony Herring are the dominant species again, with smaller numbers of Golden Perch and other species including Silver Perch. The trial will continue over the summer, with research teams back out on the Baaka soon to maintain the monitoring and assessment of the fishway technology.



Figure 2. Silver Perch moving through the Fishheart unit in September 2026 (image supplied by Fishheart).



Figure 3. Golden Perch moving through the Fishheart unit in September 2026 (image supplied by Fishheart).

NSW EPA emergency management exercise to be held in Menindee

The NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and other agencies will be in Menindee on Tuesday 22 and Wednesday 23 September 2026 to lead an exercise to test the current emergency management arrangements for a mass fish death event.

In response to the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer's report into the 2023 Menindee fish deaths, the EPA has developed a Menindee Mass Fish Death Event Response Sub Plan and will now test that plan with representatives from several local and state government agencies.

During the exercise, agencies will work through a hypothetical mass fish death scenario to test arrangements for the notification process and trigger points, the roles and responsibilities of each agency.

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.

SA Water has been contracted to carry out the work using specialist surveying equipment starting with Lake Pamamaroo in late 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.

Algae alerts

RED	• Tapio • Sunset Strip • Lake Cawndilla Outlet
AMBER	• Copi Hollow, Lake Pamamaroo Inlet and Lake Wetherell site 2 & 4 • Darling River at Weir 32 • Tolarno, Pooncarie, Ellerslie and Burtundy • Lake Menindee Outlet • Wilcannia
GREEN	• Darling River Pumping Station (Menindee Town) • Lake Wetherell site 1 & 3 • Lake Pamamaroo Outlet

- 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