



Nathan Rees MP

Minister for Emergency Services

Minister for Water Utilities

NEWS RELEASE

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GOOD RAINS WELCOME NEWS FOR NSW IRRIGATORS

State Plan Priority E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

The recent heavy rains across much of south eastern Australia have brought a welcomed Xmas present for farmers, graziers and other water users in inland NSW.

Water Utilities Minister, Nathan Rees, has announced that water allocations will be revised upwards and restrictions will be eased in a number of river systems in NSW.

“The heavy rains are expected to provide good flows in the Barwon-Darling River system, as well as the Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie, Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray valleys,” Mr Rees said.

“These flows bring significant environmental benefits, allow extra water to be made available for irrigation and mean we will be able to relax some existing restrictions.

“The flows will also boost the water supply to the towns, regional centres and industry along those rivers,” Mr Rees said.

Barwon-Darling River System

Mr Rees said flows in the Barwon-Darling will bring significant inflows into the Menindee Lakes in about five weeks.

“These flows will guarantee Broken Hill’s water supply till at least September 2009,” Mr Rees said.

“Restrictions on access to supplementary flows by irrigators in the Border Rivers, Gwydir and Namoi Valleys are to be relaxed for any of these flow events in the immediate future.

“Flows into the Menindee Lakes should mean releases can be made to the Darling River downstream of Weir 32 at Menindee, replenishing the river and providing water for stock and domestic users as well as for high security irrigation.

“Water available for general security users downstream of the Menindee Lakes will be determined in the coming weeks depending on flows passing through the Lakes.

“Flows in the river upstream of Menindee are expected to provide significant environmental benefits by diluting salinity and dispersing algal blooms. Downstream, flows will replenish water holes and reduce the potential for major fish kills.

“Good flows in the Narran River are expected to flow into the Narran Lakes – the internationally significant wetlands that has not seen significant water for more than five years.”

The immediate changes for the Barwon-Darling and associated river systems are:

- **In the Barwon-Darling River, licensed B and C class entitlement holders will have access to 10 percent of their volumetric entitlement (recently advised cap share);**
- **Licensed B class domestic and stock entitlement holders may divert up to 100 percent of their entitlement in the Barwon-Darling; and**
- **In the Border Rivers and regulated reaches of the Namoi and Gwydir Valleys, restrictions on the diversion of supplementary flows will be relaxed and licensed users may access these flows consistent with their licence conditions and respective Water Sharing Plans.**

Central-Western NSW

Mr Rees said recent rainfall was expected to generate good inflows into Burrendong Dam on the Macquarie River and Wyangala Dam on the Lachlan River.

“The Department of Water and Energy (DWE) will review the inflows over the coming week to assess what opportunities are available to increase allocations,” Mr Rees said.

Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys

“Good rainfall is expected to lead to an increased allocation for general security users in the Murrumbidgee Valley.

“Depending on water availability to NSW under interstate agreements, we hope to re-credit more of the suspended water in the Murray Valley.

“All these will be announced in the regular monthly statement on the 15th of January.”

Mr Rees said the Department would be working closely with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to assess what opportunities are available to divert tributary inflows in the Murray River into the Edward River which has not had water since July.

“While all this is great news for landholders and businesses, we are still feeling the effects of one of the worst droughts in recorded history, so I would like to remind everyone to remain conservative with their water use,” Mr Rees said.

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Information on available water determinations (AWD) is available at www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au click on the ‘AWD register’ link under ‘What’s New’ on the homepage.