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NO INCREASE IN NSW WATER ALLOCATIONS IN THE MURRAY, MURRUMBIDGEE OR LOWER DARLING RIVER VALLEYS

Mr Robert O'Neill, Acting Deputy Director General of the NSW Department of Water and Energy said today that the water supply situation in the Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lower Darling River Systems had not improved and there is no increase in allocations for high security and general security entitlements in any of these river valleys.

Mr O'Neill said that rainfall over the past fortnight throughout the southern Murray-Darling Basin has been light and patchy and has not resulted in any significant inflows into headwater storages.

Inflows in June were equivalent to the worst ever recorded and as a consequence water availability for the coming season had not improved.

The only water currently available in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys is restricted to water carried over from 2007-08 and that required to meet critical human needs. There is zero allocation for high security and general security entitlements in both valleys.

In the Lower Darling Valley, water availability the situation is slightly better with high security licences having 100per cent allocation available for 2008-09.

Mr O'Neill said that the priority for the allocation of water in the Murray Valley would be to increase high security allocation to ensure sufficient water is available for industry and to keep permanent plantings alive, and to replenishing flows in the creek systems downstream of Deniliquin to maintain the environment and to provide for stock and domestic needs.

In the Murrumbidgee Valley, improvements in water availability would be used to increase high security allocations to provide for industry and for permanent plantings.

In the Lower Darling River Valley, water in the Menindee Lakes is being managed to secure Broken Hill's water supply through to early 2010, and deliver high security and carryover water to Lower Darling Licences in the 2008-09 growing season.

Water in the Menindee Lakes will also be transferred to the Murray River in

spring to ensure that water needed for critical human needs and carryover water can be delivered to users in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

“Although the past four months have been extremely dry, rainfall over the past week has wet the catchment and future rain events should now result in runoff. When this occurs, the allocation for high security users should increase”, Mr O’Neill said.

Storages Volume @ 14 July

Hume Dam

544GL - 18%

Dartmouth Dam

710GL - 16%

Menindee Lakes

536GL - 31%

Burrinjuck Dam

432GL - 42%

Blowering Dam

639GL - 38%

Hume and Blowering Dams are currently higher than would otherwise have been expected because of the early delivery of Snowy water and the substantial volumes of carryover being stored.

The Department of Water and Energy will undertake a full resource assessment and provide an assessment of potential improvements in water availability on the 15th August in its regular communiqués issued for each valley.

The Department will continue to consult with the Critical Water Advisory Groups in determining the priority for allocation of water during the continuing drought.

MEDIA CONTACTS

Public Relations Officer

Level 3, Noel Park House

155-157 Marius St

PO Box 550

TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Telephone: (02) 6701 9662

Facsimile: (02) 6701 9680

