

## Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel (CWAP)

*The Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel held its second meeting on 21 May 2020.*

A summary of the meeting outcomes is provided below.

Further information on the function and membership of critical water advisory panels can be found in this [fact sheet](#).

The Hunter is currently in Drought Stage 1 - Normal Operations according to the NSW Extreme Events Policy, but in the coming months is likely to move into Stage 2 - Emerging Drought, if conditions do not improve.

The Hunter Critical Water Advisory Panel is being established early to assist the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment to manage the river system in close consultation with NSW government agencies and local councils if conditions worsen.

**Please note:** *All reasonable efforts have been made to provide accurate and current information in this communique. This information is accurate as at 21 May 2020. However, changes in circumstances such as weather variability, water management decisions or any other events after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the material. Water allocation statements published by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water (DPIE-Water) provide the most accurate information on available water and allocations and are available at - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements)*

## Water availability update and forecast

The Hunter Valley has received approximately 100-200mm of rainfall between the start of February and 30 April this year. While this rainfall improved river flows, triggering some supplementary access between 10 February and 27 April, it did not produce substantial inflows to storages. Both Glenbawn and Glennies Creek dams are sitting below 40% capacity (as at 21 May).

Recent inflows to the Hunter Valley are much lower (around one half to one third) than the drought of record (1939-1942) used in the water sharing plan. As a result, WaterNSW will be running the Hunter Regulated River more conservatively in 2020-2021 to minimise losses and will be actively communicating this to stakeholders.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) outlook for the next three months is for rainfall throughout inland regions to exceed the median, but along the coast only a 50% chance of exceeding median rainfall.

## New factsheet – How water is shared in the regulated Hunter water source

A factsheet has been published on the DPIE-Water website explaining how water is shared in the regulated Hunter water source.

The factsheet outlines:

- the entitlement types in the Hunter and their respective priority according to the *Water Management Act 2000* and the statutory *Water Sharing Plan for the Hunter Regulated River Water Source 2016*

- how allocations deal with climate change
- reasons for variations in general security allocations in the Hunter from one year to the next
- the outlook for allocations on 1 July 2020.

The factsheet can be accessed on the department's website - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/how-water-is-allocated/resource-assessment-process)

The latest water allocation statement for the Hunter, which was published on 20 May 2020, is available on the DPIE-Water website here - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/allocations/statements)

This statement advises that high security licences can expect an opening allocation on 1 July of up to 85% and general security just 20%.

As such low allocations have not been experienced in the Hunter since the Millennium Drought, WaterNSW is undertaking a communications campaign over the coming weeks to assist water users in managing the water remaining in their accounts prior to 1 July. General security and high security licence holders in the Hunter can carryover unused account water up to 25% of their entitlement to the following water year.

## A Hunter Drought Task Group has been established

The aim of the Hunter Drought Task Group is to coordinate multi-agency input to:

- improve awareness around available drought support services and monitor the uptake of these services
- coordinate the delivery of services and agency collaboration
- identify problems and escalate for resolution.

It includes members from Regional NSW, the Department of Primary Industries, Local Land Services, the Office of Drought Response, the Hunter Joint Organisation of Councils, the three Upper Hunter Shire Councils, Service NSW, Business Connect, NSW Education, TAFE NSW, NSW Police and Family and Community Services, NSW Health and Commonwealth agencies.

Three main focus areas are:

- financial impacts of drought
- mental and physical health impacts of drought
- communication and collaboration.

## The Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy

The strategic business cases for two infrastructure projects identified by the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy (the RWS) - the Hunter Water to Singleton pipeline and the Glennies Creek Dam to Lostock Dam connection pipeline - have been lodged with Infrastructure NSW for review.

The department is also currently working with AGL Macquarie, using the stochastic modelling and paleoclimate data produced in developing the RWS, to manage the company's water requirements as it transitions from thermal power stations to renewables over the next few years.

More information on the Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy can be found on the department's website - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/greater-hunter-region](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/plans-programs/regional-water-strategies/greater-hunter-region)

## Hunter Drought Contingency Plan

The department is developing a Hunter Drought Contingency Plan, which will act as a one-stop-shop to explain how the Hunter Regulated River system is operated during drought within the framework provided by the NSW Extreme Events Policy and the *Water Sharing Plan for the Hunter Regulated River Water Source 2016*.

## Hunter Valley drought webinar

The department and WaterNSW are continuing to engage with stakeholders regularly on water management issues during the current drought. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, drought water management roadshows cannot proceed in their regular face-to-face format.

A series of webinars are being held between the end of May and early June in the place of face-to-face meetings. The Hunter webinar was held on 2 June from 3:00-4:00pm.

The session was recorded and published online along with copies of the presentation slides. A summary of all questions asked during the webinar and answers to these questions will also be made available.

More information on the webinars, can be found on the department's website - [www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/information-sessions](http://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/information-sessions)

## Agencies present

- NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
  - Water Division (DPIE-Water)
  - Environment, Energy and Science Division (DPIE-EES)
  - Regional NSW
  - Planning
  - Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability
- WaterNSW
- NSW Department of Primary Industries
  - DPI Agriculture
  - DPI Fisheries
  - DPI Engagement and Industry Assistance
- Local Land Services
- NSW Health
- Hunter Water
- Upper Hunter Shire Council
- Muswellbrook Council