

# SA River Murray Flow Report





#### Report #16/2025

#### Issued 12:00pm 18 April 2025

This supersedes the previous Flow Report issued by the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) on 11 April 2025. The next Flow Report will be provided on Friday 25 April 2025.

### **Flow outlook**



The flow at the South Australian border is approximately 7.5 GL/day and is expected to reduce to approximately 7 GL/day by next Friday.

The current flow at the South Australian border includes the full April Entitlement Flow (4.5 GL/day), along with water for the environment, interstate trade adjustments and adjustment for deferred entitlement flows, which are stored and accumulated for critical human water needs during dry periods.

The flow over Lock 1 this Friday is expected to be approximately 6 GL/day and is expected to reduce to 5.5 GL/day by next Friday.

It is important to note that flow forecasts in this advice are based on the information available at the time of preparation. Advice may change as new gauging information becomes available or due to rainfall events or changed operations upstream.

### Water levels

Current water levels are updated daily and can be found on WaterConnect.

# **Upstream Flows, Rainfall and Storages**

The past week's rainfall in the Murray-Darling Basin was low across the basin, with up to 1mm in small pockets across southern Queensland and northern New South Wales). No rainfall was recorded across the southern basin, including central NSW, and a majority of Victoria and South Australia. Further rainfall information can be found at <a href="http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/maps/rainfall/">http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/maps/rainfall/</a>

The current forecast floods in Queensland and flow down the Cooper Creek and the Diamantina River, which is currently affecting townships such as Innamincka in the north east of South Australia, is not within the catchment of the Murray-Darling Basin and will therefore have no impact on the South Australian River Murray. These catchments are distinctly different to the Murray-Darling as they are unregulated.

Rainfall in Queensland throughout March and early April has resulted in significant flow in the Upper Darling Catchments. The forecast estimated inflows into Menindee lakes is approximately 600-1000 GL from this event. These estimates will be refined over time as the flow passes through key monitoring sites. The current estimated volume is able to be regulated into Mendindee Lakes and will not result in an increase in flow to South Australia. Further information will be provided as the flow progresses through the Darling River catchment.

As of 17 April 2025, Dartmouth Dam storage has reduced to 3,021 GL, or 78% of capacity, and Hume Dam storage has reduced to 720 GL, or 24% of capacity. Storage in the Menindee Lakes has decreased to 490 GL, or 28% of capacity. Releases from Menindee

Lakes at Weir 32 via the Darling River remain steady, targeting 1.2 GL/day and releases from Lake Cawndilla to the River Murray via the Great Darling Anabranch are around 700 ML/day.

Lake Victoria storage continues to increase to 233 GL, or 34% capacity. Releases from Lake Victoria are currently contributing to approximately 56% of the flow to South Australia.

Flows at the South Australian border averaged around 7.3 GL/day over the past week.

This forecast remains subject to change, depending on river operations and catchment rainfall. More information on upstream conditions and forecasts can be found in the <u>Murray-Darling Basin Authority's Weekly Flow Report</u>.

## Water allocations

The projected minimum opening allocation for South Australian River Murray irrigators for the 2025-26 water year is 100 percent.

With the projected minimum opening allocation being greater than 50%, the carryover of unused allocations from 2024-25 will not be available for 2025-26.

As the projected minimum opening allocation is 100 percent, no more allocation announcements are scheduled for the 2025-26 water year. In mid-June 2025, the volume of water available for allocation from the River Murray Consumptive Pool will be gazetted and allocations issued for use from 1 July 2025. Water users will be advised of this at that time.

For more information see the latest allocation statement on <u>https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water-and-river-murray/water-licences-allocations-and-markets/water-allocation-and-carryover/current-allocations.</u>

# Water quality

### Algal activity within SA

Ongoing water quality sampling in the Lower Lakes continues to be undertaken and the concentration of blue-green algae *Cylindrospermopsis raciborskii* in Lake Alexandrina remains below threshold values. The current concentration does not pose a health hazard. Some level of blue-green algae on large open water sources like the River Murray or Lower Lakes is normal for this time of year when weather conditions are favourable for growth. Water quality sampling will continue to be undertaken on a regular basis and notifications will be made to the community, as needed. Should concentrations increase and become potentially harmful to humans and animals, SA Health will issue a Water Quality Alert.

Water quality alerts in South Australia can be found on the SA Health website - Water Quality Alerts page.

As a precautionary measure, landholders that access water from the Lakes for stock watering purposes, are encouraged to manage farm water storages accordingly, noting the current high demand for water carting due to the very dry conditions throughout the Mount Lofty Ranges.

#### Algal blooms upstream of SA

WaterNSW has issued red alerts for blue-green algae (BGA) at Lake Menindee. In the Murray River, amber and green BGA alerts are in effect from Lake Hume to the South Australian border.

Victoria's Goulburn-Murray Water has issued BGA warnings for Lake Eppalock, Cairn Curran Reservoir, Newlyn Reservoir, Tullaroop Reservoir, Laanecoorie Reservoir, Hepburns Lagoon and at Lakes Boga and Charm.

A red alert from WaterNSW indicates a toxic algal bloom, making the water dangerous for humans and animals. An amber alert signifies that the water is unsuitable for drinking and may be unsafe for stock watering. Water users should exercise caution and avoid areas where signs of blue-green algae are visible.

Details of the current NSW alert locations can be found on the WaterNSW website - Algae Alerts page.

# Water for the environment delivery

Approximately 60 GL of water for the environment is expected to be delivered to the Lower Lakes during April following approximately 60 GL in March. The majority of the water arriving in April is direct trade from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, and from a small autumn pulse in the Goulburn River. This water will help to ensure that all 11 fishways can continue to pass small volumes of freshwater to the Coorong. This allows movement and migration for our native fish. In addition to allowing fishways to remain open, the environmental water will also contribute to maintaining water levels in the Lower Lakes over this period. Water for the environment also continues to be delivered as part of SA's Entitlement flow.

Water for the environment is also currently being pumped or gravity fed to a number of sites managed by the Murraylands and Riverland Landscape Board.

Planning for the delivery of water for the environment throughout 2025-26 is currently in progress. As part of this process, planning for the potential operation of the 3 major floodplain regulators (Chowilla, Pike and Katarapko) and the associated locks and weirs is also underway. Operation at each site is under consideration noting this will depend on suitable flows occurring in late winter and spring.

# **Murray Mouth**

Dredging is continuing in the Murray Mouth.

Barrage releases, combined with dredging throughout most of the year, help to maintain flow connectivity of the River Murray Channel to the Murray Mouth and assist in exporting salt from the river system.

Exclusion Zones established around the dredging operations are in place to ensure public safety. Refer to <u>Notice to Mariners</u> <u>No 61 of 2023</u>.

## Barrage operations and water levels in the Lower Lakes

As of the 17 April 2025, the water level in Lake Alexandrina is approximately 0.58m AHD and Lake Albert is approximately 0.59m AHD, noting that lake levels can fluctuate considerably depending on wind conditions.

The Lower Lakes are managed, as far as practicable, to target a daily average lake level between 0.55m AHD and 0.65m AHD throughout April.

During adverse weather conditions and high tides, SA Water will operate the barrages to minimise the risk of seawater entering Lake Alexandrina, therefore minimising any negative salinity impacts from reverse flow events. Barrage operations will continue to be undertaken dependent on upstream flows, lake levels and variable weather conditions.

Gate openings at the barrages can now be viewed on Water Data SA - Barrage dashboard.

Total daily flow releases from the barrages can also be found on Water Data SA - Flows dashboard.

#### Do you have an interest in how water is managed in the Lower Lakes and Coorong?

The Department for Environment and Water is seeking new members for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Community Advisory Panel (CLLMM CAP). More information on the Expression of Interest (EOI) process can be found on https://www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water-and-river-murray/basin-river-murray-lakes-and-the-coorong/about-the-river-murray/coorong-lower-lakes-and-murray-mouth/get-involved/cap2025-eoi.



Picture credit: Jem Tesoriero, MRLB.

### **River Murray Vessel Waste Disposal Stations**

The Lock 3 River Vessel Waste Disposal Station has been out of commission since January 2020 due to a significant infrastructure failure. The nearest alternative waste facility is located at Waikerie. Normal boat hard waste (domestic or galley waste) can still be deposited at the Lock 3 facility at the present time.

The lighting at Mannum RVWDS has been repaired and is now functional.

You can report any River Vessel Waste Disposal Station issues on 1800 799 065.

If you have any questions, please contact the DEW WIO Engagement Team on DEW.WIOCommunications@sa.gov.au

### **Salinity**

Salinity levels throughout the River Murray in South Australia are within their typical range. Nonetheless, it is possible that some irrigators may record higher salinity readings at isolated locations. These higher readings are more likely to be observed at the bottom of the water column.

Irrigators are encouraged to monitor the daily salinity levels provided by SA Water as part of their business operations.

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### Intermediate remediation of the LMRIA levees project

The Intermediate Remediation of the LMRIA Levees project is jointly funded by the Australian and South Australian governments, through the Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. This project will return the flood damaged sections of government and private levees to their pre-flood height.

Intermediate remediation works update:

- On-ground remediation works have been completed at Pompoota, Long Flat, Wall Flat, Mypolonga and Burdett.
- Works are continuing to progress at the Mobilong and Neeta levee banks, with Mobilong expected to be completed by early-May. On-ground works at Cowirra are anticipated to commence in late-May.
- The scoping and procurement for works on private levees and the preparation of associated land access agreements with landholders are progressing.
- The results of on-ground geotechnical investigations are being analysed with reports expected to be provided to the department shortly.

#### Government levees in the LMRIA are temporarily closed to the public.

Where intermediate remediation works are required for government levees, they will remain temporarily closed until the works are progressively completed and safe access is determined, which is likely to be mid-2025. Any government levee not requiring intermediate remediation work will remain temporarily closed pending the outcome of a full condition assessment and a safety risk assessment to ensure they are safe for public access.

The government levee banks are Cowirra, Neeta, Wall Flat, Pompoota, Mypolonga, Mobilong, Burdett, Long Flat, Monteith and Jervois.

#### **Recreational activities**

Recreational activities are not permitted on the levees while they are closed, including:

- walking and running
- cycling
- fishing
- driving vehicles
- mooring houseboats and other vessels.

Designated council houseboat mooring sites can be obtained from the relevant local council website.

Access to private levees is at the landholder's discretion, however, access is not permitted where remediation works are being undertaken.

The safety of the public is of paramount importance and DEW will keep the community informed of the project's progress, including when levees may be accessible to the public, through its website and newsletter.

For more information, please visit Department for Environment and Water - Levees

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa van der Linde, Communications and Engagement Officer on 0437 313 087 or Lisa.vanderlinde@sa.gov.au

### **Environmental news – Murray cod monitoring with First Nations**

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder Flow-MER Program's on-ground Monitoring, Evaluation and Research program works in partnership with First Nations groups, scientists, water managers and communities across the Murray–Darling Basin to understand how fish, birds, vegetation and river connectivity respond to Commonwealth environmental water. Bringing these various knowledge bases together increases the ability to improve river health.

In South Australia the Flow-MER provider, South Australia Research and Development Institute, is working with the River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation (RMMAC) and the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation (NAC) on Murray cod (called 'Pondi' in the Ngarrindjeri language) monitoring. Monitoring Murray cod is vital to better understand this native fish species that is a crucial part of the Basin but also because of its cultural importance to First Nations peoples.

A recent electrofishing day in Loxton was a huge success with numerous Murray cod caught and released while participants enjoyed seeing healthy fish. A yarning circle was held to finish the day with observations and ideas shared.

For more information on Flow-MER, visit the CEWH science programs page at <u>https://www.dcceew.gov.au/cewh/manage-water/science-monitoring/science-programs</u>.





Pictures: RMMAC and NAC members participated on a recent electrofishing day in Loxton SA with numerous Murray cod caught and released.

### SA River Murray Lock 3 maintenance

Mariners are advised that commencing from Monday 18 April 2025, Lock 3 at Overland Corner in South Australia will be closed to navigation for approximately 16 weeks, while SA Water undertakes extensive essential maintenance on the Lock chamber.

Vessels will not be able to navigate through Lock 3 during this time.

SA Water can be contacted at Lock 3 on 08 8588 7005 and the River Murray Operations Berri office on 08 8595 2222.

For further information visit <u>https://www.sawater.com.au/water-and-the-environment/south-australias-water-sources/river-sources/lockages</u>.



# **Further information**

- 2022-23 River Murray Flood event
- <u>Government of South Australia State Disaster Recovery</u>
- <u>SA Water quality alerts SA Health</u>
- Real-time SA water data
- <u>Current SA daily water levels</u>
- Daily flow and water level information at key SA Water sites on the River Murray
- SA daily salinity information
- <u>SA Marine safety</u>
- Real time information whole of River Murray system
- Whole River Murray System weekly reports
- Flows in the River Murray System including water for the environment
- Water for the environment actions in the Murray-Darling basin catchments
- NSW algal alerts

#### **Bureau of Meteorology**

- <u>SA rainfall and river conditions</u>
- <u>Victorian rainfall and river conditions</u>
- NSW rainfall and river conditions
- <u>Climate outlooks</u>
- <u>Climate drivers</u>

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