



MEDIA RELEASE

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Poor spring rains dash hopes for summer Murray drought relief

Continuing below average rainfall across the southern half of the Murray-Darling Basin has dashed any real hope of boosting inflows or curbing drought conditions in the Murray system over the coming summer.

Delivering the latest Murray-Darling Basin Commission's drought update, Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said September inflows at 400 GL were only a quarter of the long term average.

"October was even more disappointing with inflows even lower at 205 GL or just one-sixth of the long term average of 1390 GL," she said. "Monthly inflows for the Murray system have been below average now for the past 37 consecutive months.

"And forecasts for wetter conditions are neutral. Conditions can go either way, but historical records show that it's rare to have any significant improvement in Murray system inflows after a dry winter and spring.

"Even though some good rain in the northern half of the Basin over the past few months has helped dryland farmers, it has not been enough to produce significant runoff and streamflows into the Darling River. Even its tributaries are very low.

"With water demand increasing over the coming summer, the MDBC's river operations will initially draw on downstream storages and conserve water in upstream reservoirs for as long as possible," Dr Craik said. "This will minimise evaporative losses and maximise the system's ability to capture inflows next autumn/winter.

"Water allocations remain low across much of the system and water for critical human needs will be a top priority well into next year." She said.

Dr Craik said the continuing dry conditions have had severe social and economic impacts on key rural industries and their related communities. Impacts on the environment have been devastating.

"The Lower Lakes and the Coorong of course remain in a critical state, with record low water levels, high salinity and the ever present risk of acidification. In other parts of the system wetland and floodplain vegetation is under severe stress."

Dr Craik said there was, however, some good news for summer holiday makers along the Murray. "Although summer flows are expected to be lower than normal, the Murray is still a large body of water with plenty of opportunities for recreational and tourism activities.

"However, lower than normal levels at some locations makes it imperative that all river users check for hazards and make any necessary adjustments to their activities."

A copy of the latest MDBC Drought Update is available at www.mdbc.gov.au

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