Suspension to Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016

This information was previously made available on the Water Group website and has been endorsed for publication as fact sheet in October 2026. The information may no longer be current but has been assessed as containing relevant or useful information.

Suspension notice

Water sharing plan suspension notice	Suspension to Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016
Date suspension started	4 July 2019
Date suspensions ends	30 June 2020
Status	Expired

Reason for decision

Suspension to Water Sharing Plan for the Macquarie and Cudgegong Regulated Rivers Water Sources 2016

Background

The Macquarie River Regulated Water Source is currently at Drought Stage 4, critical water shortage. Under this stage, critical human needs have priority for the management of remaining supplies.

Due to the ongoing drought and record low inflows, Burrendong Dam is currently at less than 6 percent total capacity. At this storage volume, there is not enough water available in 2019 – 2020 for

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general security water allocations (carry over), environmental water allocations, normal high security allocations and critical human needs.

To manage remaining supplies for critical water needs, the minister will suspend water sharing plan rules.

Reasons for decisions

Water Sharing Plan suspension – section 49B

Section 49B of the Water Management Act 2000 (WM Act) enables all or part of water sharing plans to be suspended if the Minister 'is satisfied that there is an extreme event in relation to a particular Basin management area or part of the Basin water resources'. An extreme event includes an extreme dry period. The NSW Extreme Events Policy details how water should be managed during these extreme events. The priority is to secure critical human water needs (including non-human consumption requirements that would cause high social, economic or national security costs if not met).

The extreme events policy framework sets out 4 stages of operations – from normal operations in Stage 1 up to critical drought or water shortage in Stage 4. The suspension of parts of a water sharing plan is listed as a management tool for Stage 3 and Stage 4 events.

Before suspending the operation of all or part of a plan, the Minister must obtain the concurrence of the Minister for Energy and Environment.

Benefits and risks

Suspension of planned environmental water provisions clauses

The suspension of clauses 14 (10-22) will allow any remaining environmental water allowance stored in Burrendong Dam to be re-allocated for critical human needs.

This means no environmental flows will be able to be provided to the Macquarie Marshes (a RAMSAR listed wetland below Warren), from either held environmental licences (due to a lack of licence water allocations) or from the remaining environmental water allowance in the dam. The marshes received up to 123,000 megalitres in spring 2018.

Tributary inflows downstream of the dam may be available to meet some critical environmental needs until environmental releases from the dam resume.

Suspension of available water determination clauses

Under normal water sharing plan operations, each licence within a licence category receives the same treatment in terms of available water determination (AWDs – the proportional amount of water

allocation credited to licence accounts). Suspending clauses 33-38 will allow different water allocations (or AWDs) to be announced within a single access licence category.

The making of an AWD will be subject to the rules of distribution in section 60(3A) of the WM Act.

The first priority under a section 49B suspension is critical human needs, followed by water for domestic purposes and essential town services, and then the needs of the environment followed by other matters.

Suspension of reductions in carryover sub accounts

The water sharing plan includes a rule in clause 44(3)(a) requiring that water held in carryover sub-accounts be reduced based on the increased evaporation associated with holding the previous years' water in storage.

The suspension will ensure these accounts are not unfairly diminished, and users can access a fair share of their carryover when normal operations resume.