



Annual Water Outlook - Mid year update

Based on our currently strong storage position, average to wet catchments and a favourable winter rainfall outlook beyond June, we are not expecting any significant water resource concerns for the remainder of winter and into early spring.

Weather impacts

Following the high rainfalls of April and February, catchment soil moisture levels remain average or above average across our region and catchments. The exception was a slight drop to below average catchment soil moisture level in the Freestone Creek headwaters (the source for the aquifer that supplies Briagolong).

Rainfall during May varied across our region with the Latrobe Valley and Baw Baw Plateau receiving 80-100% of average. The western Strzeleckis including our Narracan Creek and Mirboo North catchments had above average May rainfall. However, east of Traralgon rainfall only reached 40-80% of average, getting progressively drier to the east.

The first week of June brought less than 20% of the monthly average right across the region. Most of June experienced stable and dry weather due to the cooling of the eastern Indian Ocean and the positive Southern Annular Mode (SAM).

Healthy streamflows

The streams that feed our local water supply have declined slightly but are still in a healthy position. Flows mostly declined during May and early June, with the exception of the Strzelecki catchments of Narracan Creek, Little Morwell River and Merrimans Creek. However, with damp catchments from earlier good rain, all streamflows remain more than adequate for our present needs.

The Wa De Lock aquifer at Briagolong enjoyed another top up in late April to early May and remains in an excellent position.

Storage in our water reservoirs has increased. Moondarra Reservoir is full. Blue Rock, from which we take a share of water, is also full. Other shared storages in the region, Tarago and Glenmaggie, increased significantly during April and May.

System-by-system status

Briagolong: Groundwater levels responded spectacularly in January and have since had three further recoveries, maintaining high levels.





Erica – Rawson: The raw water basin is now back online after repairs. Streamflows are more than sufficient to meet demand.

Latrobe: Moondarra Reservoir is full, as is our share of Blue Rock.

Mirboo North: Streamflows are more than sufficient.

Sale: No current concerns with the aquifer.

Seaspray: Streamflows in Merrimans Creek are good, but currently fall short of the minimum flow required to take water in the July to October period. However, the raw water basin is full at this time.

Tarago: Streamflows are good, enabling us to meet demand with our Tarago River entitlement. Our demand on the Bulk Water Supply Agreement with Melbourne’s retail water companies has been significantly less than last year, currently at around 230 ML. The ongoing Moe-Warragul interconnect pipeline commissioning work continues to increase demand on the Warragul system at times, however the cooler and wetter conditions in our towns has helped reduce demand compared to the hot, dry conditions last year.

Thomson – Macalister: Water resources have not been a concern with 100% of our allocation being available. Lake Glenmaggie is sitting at 79% and rising, which is much better than this time last year when it was so low we had to cart water to Coongulla.

Permanent water saving rules remain in place across our entire service area, as is the case across most of Victoria.

Outlook

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) is predicting that June will continue to be drier than average, with the likelihood of exceeding average rainfall slightly below 50% in our west but dropping to 30% around Sale and Dutson.

The positive SAM, and higher pressure across Australia, are the dominant influences on the drier June outlook. July to September, however, is much more promising with odds favouring wetter than average conditions for our whole region, increasing to a 70% likelihood of wetter conditions around Sale and Briagolong.

The El Niño–Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is likely to remain neutral over winter although a La Niña-like pattern is expected to emerge during the coming months with some models suggesting La Niña thresholds may be met by the end of winter.

The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) is also neutral at the moment but most international climate models surveyed by BOM suggest the development of a negative IOD from mid winter. A negative IOD typically brings above average winter–spring rainfall to southern Australia.

With our very full storages, damp catchments and a promising rainfall outlook, we are not expecting water resource shortfalls or water restrictions over winter or well into spring.

SAM - Southern Annular Mode

ENSO - El Niño–Southern Oscillation

IOD - Indian Ocean Dipole