

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# If Menindee is full, then why aren't allocations?

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Menindee Lakes has just filled to maximum capacity for the first time since 2012, and the dams upstream are full to spilling yet the drought in general security allocations persists.

“It’s refreshing to see water finally fill the Menindee Lakes after so many years of drought and hardship for water users and communities across New South Wales,” said CEO, Claire Miller.

“Irrigators should also be celebrating full allocations, yet Murray General Security allocations are languishing on 30 per cent and Murrumbidgee not much better on 52 per cent.

“This unprecedented situation highlights the need for the Basin Ministerial Council and NSW Government to comprehensively review river operations rules and allocation policies.

“It is absurd, for example, that releases from the dams can put a technical end to unregulated flows allowing supplementary and general security access, even as the rivers run even higher.

“It is also highlights how cumulative policy decisions by officials behind closed doors are eroding the reliability of entitlements. When the environment owns 481 GL, almost 30 per cent, of Murray general security entitlement, it is missing out as much as irrigators are.

“Officials do not have the excuse of climate change or drought for low allocations in a year of plenty.

“Neither can floodplain harvesting be blamed when Menindee has filled and the Darling River continues to run strongly despite unregulated floodplain harvesting back in March.”

The current situation puts the lie to claims abolishing floodplain harvesting would improve water availability in the NSW Murray, and supports Departmental analysis in its submission to the Floodplain Harvesting Parliamentary Inquiry:

*“even completely removing floodplain harvesting from the northern Basin is not likely to improve average annual water availability in the NSW Murray by **more than 1%**.”*

“There is clearly a serious problem here, but it is not in the northern Basin,” Ms Miller said.

“The focus must be on what can be done to improve water security for southern irrigators, and that starts with the MDBA and the NSW Government cracking open their respective allocation and rules blackboxes.”