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from the desk



Why do allocations differ between the states?

One of the issues are often hard to comprehend is why the allocations vary so much between the three states. Currently for local Victorian irrigators it's difficult to accept that their allocations are still at 0% whilst just over the river NSW irrigators already have a 25% allocation. Similarly last year SA irrigators only received 32% for the year whilst VIC irrigators finished up with 43%.

The reasons for these variations are predominantly related to how the available water is shared between the states and how the specific state distributes its available water to irrigators.

In terms of how the water is shared between SA, Vic and NSW the rules are set down in The Murray Darling Basin Agreement. These rules are quite complex and change between "normal times" and periods of "special accounting" during drought.

A very broad outline of how the water is currently shared during a period of special accounting is as follows:

Shared Resource - 1/3 each between NSW, Vic, SA

- the inflows into Hume Reservoir from the Murray River, including releases from the Snowy Mountains scheme.
- the inflows into Dartmouth Dam from the Mitta Mitta River
- the inflows into the Murray River from the Kiewa River, and

NSW Resource

- the inflows into the Menindee Lakes from the Darling River when the volume stored is below 640GL - currently 511 GL (30% capacity)
- the inflows for the Murrumbidgee River-Burrinjuck dam = 465 GL (45% capacity) and Blowering= 805 GL (48%)

VIC Resource

- the inflows for the Goulburn River River-Lake Eildon = 706 GL (21%) Waranga Basin 135 GL (31%)

AAs indicated above tributary inflows are credited to the State from which they originate, other than inflows from the Kiewa River. Clearly NSW has been the beneficiary of the water stored in Mendindee and the relatively good inflows in the Murrumbidgee, which largely explains why NSW High Security allocations are shaping up better than the other states. The inflows into the Victorian tributary's have not been as positive thus far.

The other issue to consider is the amount of irrigation entitlement each state has to

deliver each year and how they distribute it. An estimate of the volume of irrigation entitlements licences given out by each state is indicated below:

SA Irrigation Entitlement		570GL
VIC Murray System H/R		1,455GL
VIC Goulburn System H/R		1,309GL
NSW Murray Valley	High Security	180GL
	General Security	1,669GL
NSW Murrumbidgee Valley	High Security	375GL
	General Security	1,901GL
NSW Lower Darling	High Security	7.4GL
	General Security	30.3GL

As indicated above NSW has a relatively small proportion of High Security entitlement to deliver in comparison to Victoria. Whilst NSW has a large amount of General Security entitlements generally these licence holders do not receive any allocation until the High Security has been fully allocated. Overall this is a complex area and the above is a really only brief insight into why allocations differ between the states. Hopefully it gives a basic level of understanding for local irrigator to gain some insight to help with their water decisions.

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