

Snowy Hydro Limited

Snowy Scheme Water Storages Update

10 January 2007

Q) Why are the Snowy Scheme water storages so low?

A) Much of this country and in particular south eastern Australia is suffering from the effects of the major drought sequence that has been occurring since 1996. Like all water storages across south-east Australia, the water storage levels of the Snowy Scheme are not immune and are also suffering.

Some facts on the current drought and its impact on Snowy Scheme storages are:

- The current drought sequence is now longer than the previous worst dry sequence which occurred from 1936 to 1946;
- Snowy Scheme water storage levels are currently at their lowest January level since the Snowy Scheme was completed in 1973;
- Our main water storage, Lake Eucumbene is at its lowest level since construction and as a precautionary measure, water from Lake Eucumbene has largely been transferred to our head ponds such as Geehi Reservoir;
- In the last few months, water inflows have continued to be only around 25% of long term average;
- Water inflows during the last 3 months were significantly below the previous lowest ever minimums – minimums recorded over 101 years - and were worse than could have been anticipated;
- The impact of the current drought on Snowy Scheme storages has resulted in the Snowy Water Licence dry inflow sequence provisions being activated.

Because of the extremely low water inflow pattern over the last 10 years, water levels in Snowy Scheme storages have steadily decreased since 1997 and are currently around 17% of active capacity.

Q) What are the expected water levels into the future?

A) It is difficult to predict the extent or length of the current drought sequence that is affecting Snowy Scheme water storage levels. The recent rain has done little to improve water storage levels, water levels at all Snowy Scheme storages continue to drop.

If the current drought conditions continue then it is expected that by the end of summer, Lake Jindabyne water levels may drop around a further 2 m to RL 897 metres and Lake Eucumbene water levels may drop around a further 1 m to RL 1128 metres.

With no forecast improvement to water inflows in the foreseeable future Snowy Hydro must act prudently to ensure that the water which remains in the Snowy Scheme is used in a balanced way for all stakeholders and that water is conserved for this summer and coming winter.

Q) Why have water releases from Khancoban Pondage into the Swampy Plains River been reduced?

A) Achieving the balance that the Snowy Scheme has traditionally achieved between the sometimes competing demands for water for electricity requirements and water for irrigation, town water supplies and for environmental flows is now acutely problematic. Snowy Hydro continues to find ways to meet these demands as best it can. With current inflows it is not possible to adequately satisfy all user and stakeholder needs - the Snowy Scheme is now operating well outside its design parameters.

Control of water releases from Khancoban Pondage into Swampy Plains River is an example of the careful balance that under the current drought situation must be achieved; a balance between the towns on the river that rely on the water supply, the recreational users of the lake and the environment.

As the water levels in Khancoban Pondage drop, residents and lake users are advised to take extra care and be aware of visual and submerged obstacles, sandbanks and navigational hazards if they choose to use the Pondage for recreational uses.

Q) Why are Talbingo Reservoir and Jounama Pondage sometimes full?

A) In order to best use the limited water resources that remain in the Snowy Scheme prudently for all stakeholders Snowy Hydro is recycling water through its Tumut 3 Power Station at Talbingo. This means that during the day when Tumut 3 Power Station is required to generate electricity, water levels in Talbingo Reservoir will drop as water passes through Tumut 3 Power Station and flows into Jounama Pondage raising its water level.

At night the reverse will occur, water levels will drop in Jounama Pondage as water is pumped up through Tumut 3 Power Station back into Talbingo Reservoir where water levels will rise and be stored for when it is required for electricity generation. Accordingly, for most of the time we aim to keep water levels in Talbingo Reservoir near full.

Recreational users need to be aware that potential hazards exist in Talbingo Reservoir and along the foreshore as the water levels in the reservoir rise and fall.

Some restrictions have been placed on the recreational use of Jounama Pondage due to the potential for strong currents that may result from the operation of Tumut 3 Power Station.

In particular, the area directly below Jounama Pondage entering the State Water operated Blowering Dam should not be utilised for any recreational activity and campers along the Blowering foreshore need to be aware of potential impacts as substantial water discharges from Jounama Pondage into Blowering Reservoir may occur at any time.

Up to date information on water levels can be found on the Snowy Hydro web page at www.snowyhydro.com.au