

## **Snowy Hydro Limited**

### **Snowy Scheme Water Storages Update**

**28 November 2007**

#### **Q) What is the latest update on Snowy Scheme water storages?**

A) The recent months of spring have seen some improvements in lake levels mainly due to the usual seasonal inflow increases from snowmelt. However, as a result of warm temperatures, a below medium snow season and low precipitation, these water inflows have been significantly lower than long term average. While spring run off has been much lower than average, it has still exceeded what Scheme storages received last spring, which recorded the lowest inflows on record.

Overall, since May this year water inflows into Scheme storages have been well below long term average and Snowy Scheme storages are still at around their lowest levels since construction. Prolonged above average inflows will be required to return water levels to those seen prior to the start of this drought cycle in 1996.

It is very difficult for anyone to accurately predict future weather patterns and associated water inflows. However, it is anticipated that we will experience another water year where minimum releases will be automatically reduced under the Snowy Water Licence. In addition, under this continuing drought scenario, major water storage levels such as Jindabyne and Eucumbene are likely to drop, as they did last year.

However, even if these current drought conditions continue, due to our water management strategies of increased gas generation and recycling of water at Tumut 3 Power Station, Snowy Hydro believes that it can meet its water and electricity commitments going forward.

#### **Q) What is likely to happen to flows from Tantangara Reservoir into the Murrumbidgee River and Cooma Town water supplies?**

A) In accordance with the Snowy Water Licence and the Annual Water Operating Plan (AWOP), Snowy Hydro has been releasing Montane River environmental releases into the Murrumbidgee River over the past 3 months. These releases are in addition to the normal riparian releases that occur from Tantangara Dam.

From the beginning of December, in accordance with the AWOP, Montane River environmental releases into the Murrumbidgee River will cease with our usual riparian release arrangements continuing to be in place.

Under the AWOP, Tantangara riparian releases up to the lesser of either 83 megalitres per day or the inflows into Tantangara Reservoir are to be made into the Murrumbidgee River. These releases are structured to, as far as possible maintain the flow of the Murrumbidgee River at Mittagang Crossing at around 32 megalitres per day.

However, as experienced last summer when we recorded record low inflows, Snowy Hydro with agreement from the NSW Government released additional water in order to ensure adequate flows for Cooma town water supplies.

Whilst inflows are not yet at those record lows, due to the current dry conditions, Snowy Hydro in consultation with Cooma Monaro Shire Council will be regularly reviewing the status of inflows and releases to enable appropriate decision making in regards to Cooma town water supplies.

**Q) What are the likely water scenarios for Khancoban Pondage and Swampy Plains River during summer?**

A) Achieving the balance that the Snowy Scheme has traditionally achieved between the sometimes competing water demands for farms, townships, electricity, the environment and recreational users is extremely difficult, particularly under these current drought conditions.

Control of water releases from Khancoban Pondage into Swampy Plains River and the management of Khancoban Pondage levels is an example of the careful balance that Snowy Hydro strives to achieve.

At this stage, based on current inflows and expected electricity generation patterns, it is anticipated that Khancoban Pondage can be maintained at a suitable level for recreational users and flows into the Swampy Plains River can be sustained during the upcoming summer holiday period of December to early January.

However, if inflows conditions become worse in the lead up to or during this holiday period it may become necessary for Snowy Hydro to both reduce flows into the Swampy Plains River (to levels below 5 cubic metres per second) as well as reducing Khancoban Pondage to much lower levels.

While water releases from Khancoban Pondage into Swampy Plains River are expected to remain at around 5 cubic metres per second, subject to inflow patterns, there still may be times when it is necessary to significantly increase flows (up to 100 cubic metres per second or above) to allow for increased generation from the Snowy Scheme or local storm events.

This will normally occur when the Snowy Scheme is required to provide additional electricity to the National Electricity Market under hot weather or when the electricity network is under stress.

Up to date information on water release flows into the Swampy Plains River can be obtained on the recorded Khancoban Pondage water release information line on (02) 6453 2098.

**Q) How can we get information on lake levels and water releases from Snowy Scheme dams?**

A) Snowy Hydro has a website based water resources information service so that the public can access information on water resources data relating to the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

This service can be accessed via the homepage on the Snowy Hydro website at [www.snowyhydro.com.au](http://www.snowyhydro.com.au). It provides information on lake levels, snow depths and releases into local rivers including the volume of environmental releases into the Snowy River from Jindabyne Dam.