

26 May 2022

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Regional Water Strategies
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SNOWY HYDRO SUBMISSION ON DRAFT MURRUMBIDGEE AND MURRAY REGIONAL WATER STRATEGIES

Snowy Hydro is a dynamic, integrated energy business. Our role is to ensure energy security, underpin the transition to renewables, and increase competition in energy markets.

Since the Snowy Scheme's completion in 1974, Snowy Hydro has carefully managed the water that flows through the Scheme's dams, tunnels, aqueducts and power stations in accordance with our water licence. Snowy Hydro operates the complex hydro-electric scheme utilising the water captured by the Scheme in the upper catchments of the Murrumbidgee, Murray and Snowy rivers to generate energy to meet the market's needs, while also moving water from east to west to support irrigation districts.

Snowy Hydro has readily supported the integrated water modelling carried out to inform the draft Murrumbidgee and Murray strategies and welcomes the discussion of challenges and opportunities for improving water management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions.

More specifically, Snowy Hydro welcomes discussion in the draft Murrumbidgee Regional Water Strategy of the operational challenges posed by the Tumut River channel capacity constraints and supports shortlisting options aimed at addressing them.

Under the Snowy water licence, when Blowering Reservoir is spilling and the Tumut River is at or above capacity, Snowy Hydro can only release a volume of water equal to the flows that would have naturally occurred if the Snowy Scheme was not in place. In wet years, this constraint can curtail Snowy Hydro's ability to utilise Tumut 3 power station (1800MW). As the largest supplier of on-demand electricity generation in NSW, reducing our ability to contribute to National Electricity Market reserves increases the risk of load shedding and black outs across the network.



The Blowering Air Space Deed is a mechanism in place for Snowy Hydro to manage risks of release restrictions coming into effect. However, the Tumut River channel capacities referenced in the Murrumbidgee Regulated River water sharing plan reduce the efficacy of the airspace deed and exacerbate the difficulties of airspace management at Blowering Reservoir.

Several of the options presented in the long list for the Murrumbidgee region have the potential to simultaneously reduce the likelihood of Snowy Hydro release restrictions, maximise water conservation for water users and improve flood management. These include:

- Option 33 Investigate alternatives for increased storage capacity
- Option 35 Install gravity pipeline along Tumut River
- Option 36 Raising Blowering Dam.

Snowy Hydro supports further assessment of these options.

Snowy Hydro also considers it prudent to review the appropriateness of the Tumut River channel capacities referenced in the Murrumbidgee water sharing plan. This should be done as part of a review flood management and airspace operation, as proposed in Option 42.

It has been demonstrated in both the 2010-11 and 2016 flood events that the limits of 9 GL/day at Oddy's Bridge and 9.3 GL/day at Tumut township severely and unnecessarily hamper the ability of WaterNSW to make pre-releases from Blowering Reservoir. Release volumes in the order of 15 GL/day were observed during the 2016 flood event and were shown to not impact or create significant risk to people or infrastructure. The existing limit of 9.3 GL/day exacerbates the risk of significant flooding in the Tumut and Murrumbidgee valleys by reducing the ability to create airspace ahead of impending inflows.

Should you have any queries or would like further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Snowy Hydro looks forward to continuing engagement with the NSW Government on the strategies as they progress, and on current and future reviews of the Snowy water licence.

Yours sincerely,

