



NSW Police Force

MEDIA RELEASE

EOC to stand-down as monitoring of the Darling-Baaka River expands downstream

Issued at 4pm, Thursday 30 March 2023

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) will be stood down this week as agencies expand their water monitoring to downstream of Menindee following fish kills in the lower Darling-Baaka River.

The EOC was established on Saturday 18 March 2023 at the direction of State Emergency Operations Controller, Deputy Commissioner Emergency Management Peter Thurtell, to ensure fresh and clean water supply was maintained to the Menindee township and properties surrounding the Main Weir pool, as well as to coordinate the removal and disposal of as many of the dead fish as possible.

NSW Police Force Regional Emergency Operations Controller, Assistant Commissioner Brett Greentree, said the EOC has delivered on its priorities in and around Menindee, but key agencies will remain vigilant with monitoring and actioning where new risks are identified.

“Essential Water is conducting testing the quality of drinking water daily and continue to deliver drinking water to their customers that meet the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines,” Assistant Commissioner Greentree said.

“This is backed-up by assessments and advice from NSW Health that the drinking water supply in Menindee township is safe to drink but we need to reiterate that the advice that water sourced directly from the Darling River – bypassing the Water Treatment Plant – should not be considered potable water.”

Increased monitoring and assessment of water supply for the townships of Pooncarie and Wentworth is underway and contingencies are being considered.

“Assessments by contractors and our experts recommend clean-up operations – which saw up to 10 tonnes of dead fish removed from the river and buried as landfill – can now wind down,” Assistant Commissioner Greentree said.

“We now have established contacts and processes for clean-up in the event it is required in the future.”

The EOC will be stood down about 9am tomorrow (Friday 31 March 2023) following a handover briefing to return the coordination of operations under the control of individual agencies.



NSW and Commonwealth Government agencies are continuing to monitor conditions, take samples and test water, and take actions to try to improve conditions, including dissolved oxygen (DO) levels, in the Murray Darling Basin.

Of note, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has received preliminary water test results from the six samples collected by WaterNSW last Tuesday (21 March 2023) on the Darling River from downstream of the Pamamaroo outlet to downstream of Weir 32.

The EPA had these samples tested for pesticides, nutrients, metals, algal toxins and algae.

The preliminary water results tested negative for pesticides and scanned for approximately 600 pesticides.

All six water samples contained potentially toxic algae and blue-green algae.

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The testing is continuing with results of metal and nutrient testing likely to be available later this week and will be made available to the community.

Assistant Commissioner Greentree added that the Wentworth Local Emergency Management Committee would support those who are continuing work to prevent another large-scale fish-kill event.

“We promised we will keep the community updated on operations, and we facilitated another meeting at Menindee this morning to do just that,” Assistant Commissioner Greentree said.

“This gave me the opportunity to explain the closure of the EOC directly to the Menindee community, and for representatives from key agencies to discuss the actions taken and their proposed activities moving forward.

“I want to reiterate that while the emergency operation is concluding, there will still be significant work being conducted by the responsible agencies throughout the Murray-Darling Basin and beyond.

“Finally, on behalf of those involved in this operation, I would like to thank the Menindee community for their contributions, and importantly, acknowledge their resilience during these tough times.”

Members of the community are still urged to report observations of struggling fish or deaths directly to DPI Fisheries on 1800 043 536.

For more information about fish kills, as well as recent reports of observations and causes, visit:

<https://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/fishing/habitat/threats/fish-kills>

Information about the monitoring, management and maintenance of water quality, including detailed community updates from the Department of Planning and Environment, is available online:

<https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/water/allocations-availability/droughts-floods/drought-update/managing-drought-recovery/blackwater>

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