

Snowy River 2010 - Fact Sheet-

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- 1967 The Snowy Hydro Scheme captures 99% of the Snowy River's headwaters upon completion of the Jindabyne Dam.
- 1996 Snowy River Alliance forms.
- The *Expert Panel Environmental Flow Assessment of the Snowy River Below Jindabyne* recommends 28% mean annual natural flow (MANF) as the minimum environmental flow needed for the Snowy below Jindabyne Dam.
- 1999 Steve Bracks wins government in Victoria with a promise to the newly elected Member for Gippsland East, Craig Ingram, that the Bracks Government will restore 28% to the Snowy River.
- 2002 Snowy Hydro is corporatised, with legislation committing the three shareholder governments of NSW, Victoria and the Commonwealth to funding the restoration of 21% of annual natural flow to the Snowy River below Jindabyne Dam, 70 Gegalitres to the Murray and increased flows to the Snowy montane rivers equivalent to 150GWh foregone electricity generation (118GL). This is to be achieved by 2012, primarily through investment in water savings infrastructure in the Murray irrigation system to offset the Snowy environmental flows.
- 2007 Commonwealth Governments contributes an additional \$50million to Water for Rivers to meet the 2012 Snowy Increased Flow target of 21% MANF.

So where are we now?

Legislated Environmental Flows

The legislated environmental flow targets for the Snowy River are:

- by 2009 the return of 15% (142 gegalitres plus total base passing flow of 33 GL)
- by 2012 the return of 21% (212 gegalitres plus total bpf of 33GL)
- post 2012 the return of 28% (294 gegalitres plus total bpf of 33GL)

NB : 1 Gegalitre = 1 billion litres= 1,000 megalitres.

Actual Snowy Environmental Flows

Year	Total releases	Percentage of MANF (1164GL)
2002/03	19.7GL	1.7%
2003/04	38.7GL	3.3%
2004/05	32.5GL	2.8%
2005/06	50.0GL	4.3%
2006/07	45.7GL	3.9%
2007/08	41.1GL	3.5%
2008/09	47.1GL	4.04%
2009/10	Planned releases 46.7GL	4.01%

Note that to reach 2009 target of 15% in real terms, an extra 4.8% (56.3 gegalitres) remains to be paid back to Snowy Hydro Ltd for water that flowed down the Mowamba River from the time the Mowamba Aqueduct was de-commissioned in August 2002 to January 30 2006.

Mowamba Aqueduct

When Mowamba Aqueduct was de-commissioned (i.e. shut off) to return the first environmental flows to the Snowy on August 28 2002, it was the understanding of the Snowy communities and the wider Australian public that the Aqueduct would remain permanently decommissioned. However, on January 31 2006, Snowy Hydro Ltd re-opened Mowamba Aqueduct, diverting the waters of the Mowamba River, a tributary of the Snowy, back into the Jindabyne Dam and effectively cutting the Snowy off from anything resembling natural headwaters.

Snowy Scientific Committee

Under Section 57 of the NSW Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act (which came into effect on June 28, 2002), the Snowy Scientific Committee was to be established to advise the NSW Water Administration Ministerial Corporation on environmental flows for the Snowy River and other rivers and streams in the Snowy Scheme. It was also to produce annual public State of the Environment Reports and these were to be available to inform public submissions to the first Five-Year Review of the Snowy Water Licence. However the NSW Government delayed the establishment of the Snowy Scientific Committee until 31st January 2008, the same day as the closing date for submissions to the Five Year Review.

The Snowy Scientific Committee's first report, *Adequacy of Environmental Releases to the Snowy River*, October 2008, was finally released by NSW DWE in March 2009. The report findings are a damning indictment of progress so far on the restoration of the Snowy River.

Five-Year-Review of the 75 year Snowy Water Licence

In June 2007, the first Five-Year-Review of the Snowy Water Licence was due. This review was to be specifically a review of the Licence provisions relating to Snowy River environmental flows. However the NSW Government specifically excluded the adequacy of flows from the terms of reference of the Review. Contrary to the legislation, there were also no Snowy Scientific Committee State of the Environment reports exhibited because the Committee had not been established. The Five Year Review was supposed to be completed within six months of the fifth anniversary of corporatisation i.e. December 2007. However the NSW Government did not announce the Review until December 2007. Many submissions to the Review advocated the decommissioning of Mowamba Aqueduct to restore the Mowamba River as surrogate natural headwaters to the Snowy. According to the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation legislation the Licence could be amended in this regard following the first review and compensation would not be owed to Snowy Hydro Ltd. The Final Report of the Review was unilaterally released by the NSW Government in November 2009, two years overdue. The Final Report delayed addressing the issue of decommissioning of Mowamba Aqueduct until 2012 despite the weight of scientific evidence, community support and submissions from the co-shareholder governments. The Final Report did not recommend any variations to the Snowy Water Licence that would address the failure of the current Licence provisions to deliver the scheduled flows and improved environmental conditions to the Snowy River.

Water for Rivers.

Water for Rivers, the authority funded to obtain the water savings, has faced a tripling of costs since its establishment due to increased competition from other government funded water recovery programs. Savings from one of its water infrastructure projects are also to be diverted to Melbourne via the north-south pipeline for three years. In NSW, the Barren Box Swamp project received no allocation on the 20GL environmental entitlement for the last two years despite equivalent entitlements receiving 95% allocation last year.

Some of Water for Rivers water savings projects and entitlement purchases have been general security water, which have delivered NO real water to the Snowy. Consequently, by 2012 \$425 million of taxpayers' money will have been spent to return approximately 142 GL water to the Snowy. The Snowy and Murray may never receive any of the remaining 140GL owed. In addition Snowy Hydro has withheld almost 60GL of savings owed the Murray River. Water for Rivers urgently requires major increased funding to deliver the legislated increased flows, as real water not paper water.