

3RD MASS KILL IN MENINDEE

# MILLIONS OF DEAD FISH CLOG AUSSIE RIVER

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Deaths related to low oxygen levels in water as floodwaters recede

## SYDNEY

**M**ILLIONS of dead and rotting fish have clogged a vast stretch of river near a remote town in the Australian outback as a searing heatwave sweeps

through the region.

Videos posted to social media showed boats ploughing through a blanket of dead fish smothering the water, with the surface barely visible underneath.

The New South Wales (NSW) government said on Friday “millions” of fish had died in the Darling River near the small town of Menindee, in the third mass kill to hit the area since 2018.

“It’s horrific really, there’s dead fish as far as you can see,” Menindee local Graeme McCrabb said. “It’s surreal to comprehend.”



A boat ploughing through a blanket of dead fish on the Darling River near Sydney on Friday. AFP PIC

He said this year’s fish kill appeared to be worse than previous ones.

“The environmental impact is unfathomable.”

Populations of fish such as bony herring and carp had boomed in the river following recent floods, according to the state government, but were now dying off in huge numbers as floodwaters receded.

“These fish deaths are related to low oxygen levels in the water (hypoxia) as flood waters recede,”

the government said.

“The current hot weather in the region is also exacerbating hypoxia as warmer water holds less oxygen than cold water, and fish have higher oxygen needs at warmer temperatures.”

Previous fish kills at Menindee — about 12 hours’ drive west of here — have been blamed on a lack of water in the river due to prolonged drought and a toxic algal bloom that stretched over 40km.

“Unfortunately, this won’t be

the last,” the NSW government warned in 2019.

State government fisheries spokesman Cameron Lay said it was “confronting” to see the river choked by dead fish.

“We are seeing tens of kilometres where there is fish really as far as the eye can see, so it’s quite a confronting scene,” he told the ABC.

Menindee has a population of some 500 people and has been ravaged by both drought and flooding in recent years. **AFP**