

# stream news

## A bulletin for Melbourne Water diverters



**Melbourne  
Water**

### Helping you keep in touch

Welcome to the first issue of Stream News. We hope you like it. This newsletter is designed to keep you informed about diversion matters that affect your businesses, such as water trading, dams, the drought, pricing and Streamflow Management Plans. We will issue several bulletins a year and

make the content as readable and relevant as possible to all Melbourne Water diverters – no matter which stream you draw from and what sort of licence you hold. We welcome your feedback on this and all other editions. Please feel free to contact Peter Rankin on (03) 9840 5700.

### Now you can trade your water

You can choose to buy or sell your water entitlements under a new exchange system set up by Melbourne Water that will break the long-standing link between land and water.

All diverters can trade water to others, temporarily or permanently, in full or in part, to suit their needs, and can also buy additional water from other licence holders.

The buyer and seller will determine prices, and all transfers are subject to approval by Melbourne Water and on payment of the prescribed fee.

Melbourne Water will approve transfers only if they have no significant impact on the security of supply of other licence holders or on the environment.

Water trading is possible because the diversion function is now managed under the *Water Act 1989*, rather than the *Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works Act 1958*.

Peter Rankin, Melbourne Water's Manager of Yarra Operations, said: "This change enables us to offer increased choice to individuals and enterprises wanting to set up or expand operations that require water diverted from waterways for irrigation or other purposes."

All diverters are being forwarded a new Diversion Licence issued under the Water Act to replace Diversion Permits issued under the MMBW Act. The conditions will remain substantially unchanged, although you may notice an increased emphasis on the use of metering, rather than irrigated area, to determine the volume of water allocated in the future. Expect more information on metering in future editions of *Stream News*.

Water transfers will be managed through the Water Exchange at Melbourne Water's Doncaster office. For further information, please contact Phil Biasi or Keiran Croker on 9840 5700.

*To buy or sell water, you will need to fax your name, contact telephone/fax number, diversion licence number, volume required to buy or sell, and the buy/sell price, to Melbourne Water on (03) 9840 5710. Alternatively you may e-mail the information to: [twe@melbwater.com.au](mailto:twe@melbwater.com.au).*

### Community helps plan creek's future

Hoddles Creek diverters are part of a community working group which is helping to develop a Streamflow Management Plan for the waterway.

The Streamflow Management Plan will set out a framework of rules for the operation of the Hoddles Creek catchment that aims to protect the long-term health of the waterway and ensure that future development does not impact on existing water users.

It will spell out diverters' rights to water, covering issues such as water trading, environmental flows, licensing, rostering, allocation caps, and diversion limits.

A draft plan is scheduled to be released for public comment in June 2000.

There are 31 licensed diverters in the Hoddles Creek catchment. Their representatives on the community working group are **David Finger**, of Vernview Pty Ltd, Launching Place, **Ray Guerin**, of Hoddles Creek Vineyard, Yarra Junction, and **Robert Davis**, of Established Tree Transplanters Pty Ltd.



**The Hoddles Creek working group during one of its meetings.**

The group, which has met a number of times in the past three months, also includes representatives from Melbourne Water, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Environment Protection Authority, Environment Victoria, Port Phillip Catchment and Land Protection Board, Victorian Farmers Federation and the Shire of Yarra Ranges.

The next Stream Management Plans scheduled to be developed are for the Diamond Creek and Plenty River catchments.

The Hoddles Creek Streamflow Management Plan is the first in the Yarra catchment. Streamflow Management Plans will be developed for all major waterways and tributaries in the Yarra catchment over the next five or so years.

*For further information, contact Steve Nicol, of Melbourne Water, on (03) 9840 5724.*

### Your bill

You will have noticed that your recent Melbourne Water account is for a nine-month period only (75 per cent of last year's amount). This is because Melbourne Water is changing its payment period to 1 July - 30 June of each year (from the previous October - September). Your next bill will be for a full 12 months.

## Yarra River catchment continues to cope reasonably well

The Yarra River catchment has fared much better than the Maribyrnong catchment during the big dry of the past three years. For the year to 15 December, the Upper Yarra catchment received 79 per cent of its average annual rainfall.

This has enabled the Yarra River at Warrandyte to maintain a flow of 47 per cent of the long-term average for November and December. The average daily flow in the Yarra at Warrandyte for the first half of December has been 363 megalitres a day, with a minimum daily flow of 318ML/day on 9 December.

Melbourne Water's Drought Response Plan Level 1 restrictions will be activated once flows drop to 300ML/day as a seven-day rolling average.

### How orchardist saves water – and money

Yarra Valley orchardist David Finger relies on a Gopher to ensure his business is efficient and cost-effective.

His Gopher Profiler is a device that measures soil moisture at different depths. It is like having a pair of eyes underground.

David, who grows apples on 22 hectares at his Launching Place property on Hoddles Creek, uses the soil moisture technology to optimise the yield, quality and size of his crop.

The device is pushed down 50mm PVC pipes placed at strategic points around the property. The Gopher Profiler provides readings at various depths that tell David exactly how much water his plants need – and are taking up.

David, who has been using the technology for three seasons, said it enabled him to keep historical records on computer, using information downloaded from the Gopher Profiler.

"This is increasingly a low margin business," he said. "This technology enables me to cut the costs of pumping water by up to 30 per cent, and maximise efficiency in a way that gives me that little extra margin.

"In the past I was watering too long – and beyond the root zone. Now I know exactly how much water to use and when to use it."

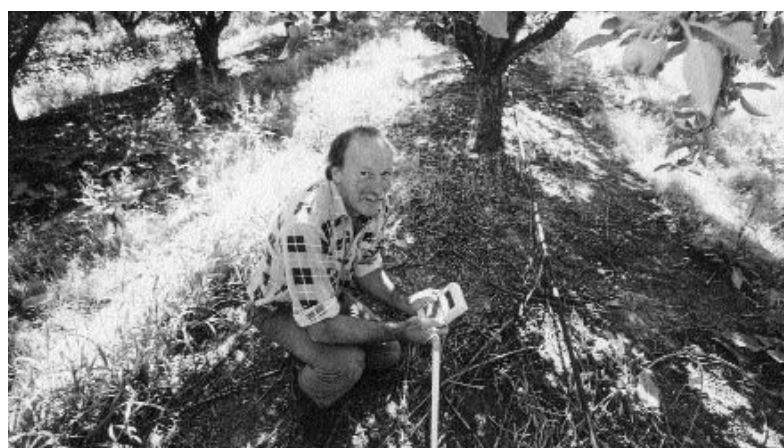
David believes the technology can play an important role in managing droughts, by helping businesses maximise the benefit from limited water.

He has a 25-megalitre dam which gravity feeds a smaller holding

dam. He is installing a self-cleaning filter to ensure the highest water quality to avoid blockages in his drip irrigation system, which is ideal for the sandy clays at his property.

David reckons that it's his water rights – along with his offstream dams – that will ultimately provide the value of his property.

"Water is *the* currency now," he said. "You can't go on using it and go out and get more, like you can with almost anything else, including money. Water is a finite resource."



David Finger: Technology helps him use less water.

For further information on the Gopher Profiler, contact Soil Moisture Technology on (07) 5442 5833.

"The Hoddles Creek working group has been taking a holistic look at water management within the catchment to try to maintain its long-term health," he said. "So we're focusing on who takes water from the waterway, as well as issues like roadside drainage and loss of riparian vegetation."

Steve points out that all diverters will be asked for their input into Streamflow Management Plans in their catchments over the next few years. He believes it will take at least five years before all the plans are complete.

Steve started in the industry as a hydrographer, working with the Rural Water Corporation out of Gisborne. He helped develop the first draft Streamflow Management Plan (for Merri River, in the western district) in 1996, when he was working for Southern Rural Water out of Camperdown.

### Steve's balancing act

Steve Nicol's job involves balancing the business, recreational, environmental and future needs of waterways and their users.

Steve, a Water Resource Officer with Melbourne Water, is responsible for working with the diverter and broader community to develop Streamflow Management Plans throughout the Yarra catchment.

The first such plan in the catchment is for Hoddles Creek, and Steve believes a working party of diverters and other users that has been formed to progress the plan is breaking new ground.



Steve Nicol

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