



Drought Restrictions Lifted

Even though most streamflows are still running at below average levels for this time of year, Melbourne Water is lifting all drought restrictions effective immediately. The reason is that the streamflow for the Yarra River at Warrandyte has now risen above the drought response plan trigger level of 300ML/d and is expected to stay at or above this level for some time. Melbourne Water wishes to thank all diverters for their co-operation during the restriction period. Please note, however, that restrictions may be required again this season.

Fees

Implementing the Environment Protection Authority's State Environment Protection Policy (SEPP) has imposed new costs on Melbourne Water. For this reason, there is going to be a small increase in the diversion licence fee. Melbourne Water has kept this increase to a minimum, and is passing on only the costs that relate directly to diverters.

The diversion licence fee has two parts: – a licence allocation fee, and a volumetric fee. The licence allocation fee, which varies from \$25 to \$200, will not change. The volumetric fee is being increased by 75 cents per megalitre (million litres or ML), from \$2.75 to \$3.50. The average total fee increase is \$13, although people who divert or pump large amounts of water will pay a significantly larger increase. **Please note that, on current advice, diversion licence fees are GST exempt.**

Update on Streamflow Management Plans

The SEPP requires Melbourne Water to prepare Streamflow Management Plans (SMPs) for major streams and catchments. These plans will provide a set of rules for using water and protecting the environment in each catchment. The purpose is to ensure that future development does not penalise existing water users, or compromise the long-term health of the waterway.

To develop these plans, Melbourne Water must scientifically determine environmental streamflows and install flow-measuring devices on major streams.

There are already streamflow gauges on most of the major tributaries of the Yarra River. This will lead to improved management of streamflows, benefiting diverters and the environment. Only those costs directly associated with diverters has been passed on through the fee increases reported above. Most of the costs are being borne by Melbourne Water.

Plans will be developed in consultation with licence holders in each affected catchment.

Preparatory work on the Hoddles Creek plan is well advanced and a Draft will be released to key stakeholders and the public probably in November. Melbourne Water has begun gathering data on other streams as part of preparing plans for them.



Western Water's Geoff Mabbett at Rosslynne Reservoir

Diamond Creek Streamflow Management Plan

A community working group has been set up by Melbourne Water to help develop a Streamflow Management Plan for the Diamond Creek catchment.

Working group members include representatives from Diamond Creek Licensed diverters, Department of Natural Resources & Environment, Environment Protection Authority, Environment Victoria, Port Phillip Catchment & Land Protection Board, Nillumbik Shire and Melbourne Water.

Melbourne Water's Managing Director, Brian Bayley said that working closely with the local community to develop the plan would ensure a balanced and sustainable sharing of an important water resource.

"Consultation is a critical component of creating an effective plan. The working group will have to consider the needs of licensed diverters, the environment and other uses of the creek.

When the draft management plan has been completed, Melbourne Water will organise briefings for all licensed diverters in the Diamond Creek catchment.

The draft plan will then be released for public comment."

For further information please contact Melbourne Water's Water Resource Management Officer, Steve Nicol on telephone (03) 9840 5724.

Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program

Melbourne Water is responsible for taking care of our streams. Rehabilitation of stream verges is an urgent priority.

To help get this done, Melbourne Water has created a Stream Frontage Management Program. The program relies on co-operative efforts between Melbourne Water, landholders, Landcare and other community groups.

The program targets degraded rural waterway frontages across the Western Port and Port Phillip drainage Basins.

Through funding and technical assistance, it assists landholders rehabilitate private freehold and leased stream frontages, and encourages landholders to take on-going responsibility for the area.

Benefits

Benefits to the landholder and the environment include increases in land value through improved landscapes, improved water quality, bed and bank stability and an increase in aquatic and terrestrial fauna. Melbourne Water also offers an opportunity to attend education/extension programs to improve participants' capability and knowledge.

There are also benefits to downstream properties and landowners involved in the program can have the satisfaction of contributing to a sustainable environment.

If you would like to inquire further about this program or seek an application form please contact Roger Lord on (03) 9235 2124.

Move to July – June financial year

The account for 2000/01 is for the 12-month period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001, compared to last year's account, which was for the 9-month period from 1 October 1999 to 30 June 2000. All future accounts will now be issued for the July-June financial year in keeping with statewide practice.

Apply to renew licence by paying the annual fee

Please note that diversion licences are valid for a twelve-month period, and Melbourne Water will normally renew the licence for a further period of 12 months, provided you pay the annual fee. **If you do not pay the fee by the due date, Melbourne Water will take it that you want the licence cancelled.** If you cannot pay by the due date because of exceptional circumstances but wish to retain your licence, you must ask Melbourne Water in writing before the due date to consider deferring your payment, and outline your reasons.



Landcare/Community Group tree planting as part of the Stream Frontage Management Program

Farm Dam Review Process

The Victorian Farm Dams (Irrigation) Review Committee was established by the Government to facilitate public debate on the management of farm (catchment) dams and other related water resource management issues.

A discussion paper, Sustainable Water Resources Management and Farm Dams, was released by the Government on 30 April 2000 seeking submissions from the community. Submissions may be made up to 30 September 2000 and further information is available from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment on telephone 136 186.

Want More Information?

*Please contact Steve Hosking,
Phil Biasi or Peter Rankin on
telephone (03) 9840 5700.*