

### Dams, Diversions and Stock Watering Facilities

Melbourne Water is working with private landholders to provide advice on dam maintenance, water diversions and off-stream stock watering facilities that connect to waterways in areas affected by the recent Victorian bushfires.

Melbourne Water administers licences to divert water from waterways for agricultural, industrial, commercial and stock purposes. We administer these licences for the Yarra River catchment, including the fire affected areas from Whittlesea across to Warburton in the Upper Yarra.

We also offer funding assistance, technical advice and educational opportunities to landowners with frontages to important rivers and creeks through our Stream Frontage Management Program. We work with landowners to protect, improve and manage their dams and off-stream stock watering facilities by assisting to:

- replace or repair off-stream stock watering facilities like pipes and troughs for stock drinking away from streams;
- re-establish riparian fences, plantings and control weeds; and
- rehabilitate riparian areas.

Funding may continue for several years if a project needs to be done in stages.

### Water Diversions

#### Why do I need a Diversion licence to divert water from waterways?

Under the Water Act 1989, a licence is required to take and use water from waterways and private farm dams for agricultural, industrial, and commercial purposes. A licence may also be required to take water for domestic and stock purposes.

#### Can I obtain a Diversion Licence?

Licensing caps limit the allocation of water in most catchments to protect

existing users and the environment. New users may need to obtain a water allocation by water trading with existing licence holders.

#### Does a Diversion Licence guarantee the quantity or quality of water?

Melbourne Water cannot control the flow of water or the discharge of materials into our waterways. The licence therefore does not guarantee the quantity or quality of water from the stream.

## **Who is responsible for administering a Diversion licence?**

Melbourne Water is responsible for diversion and dam licences in the Yarra River catchment; Goulburn Murray Water is responsible for the Kinglake and Murrundindi area; and Southern Rural Water is responsible for the Bunyip and Tarago Rivers area.

## **Is there a fee to obtain a Diversion Licence?**

An application fee of up to \$660 applies to obtain a licence. Diversion licence holders then pay annual fees for the water of around \$210 plus \$17 per megalitre of water allocated.

## **Will I have to pay the Diversion fee this year if my property has been affected by the bushfires?**

Melbourne Water will waive the 2008/09 Diversion fees for licence holders whose properties have been directly affected by the fires and who have not already received the Drought Relief rebate provided by the Government.

This mainly applies to affected licence holders in the Watts River catchment and some parts of the Yarra River catchment. The Government drought rebate has already been applied to bushfire areas in the Plenty River, Diamond Creek, Steels Creek, Dixons Creek and Pauls Creek catchments.

## **How will I know whether I have to pay the Diversion licence fee?**

Melbourne Water will contact affected licences holders about their eligibility for the fee waiver. Licensees who have already paid their invoice will receive a refund. Licensees who do not hear from Melbourne Water and feel they have been affected should contact the Melbourne Water Diversions team.

## **Dams**

### **Who is responsible for dams?**

While some dams require a licence to construct or operate, the dam itself remains the responsibility of the private landowner. Landowners should:

- regularly inspect the dam and monitor conditions that may affect the safety of the dam;
- perform regular maintenance and repairs to meet current design and construction standards; and
- have an experienced dam engineer investigate any unusual conditions.

### **Can I build a new dam?**

Landowners should first carefully consider their water needs and whether a suitable dam site is available.

You should notify Melbourne Water of any proposed new dam so that we can advise you on licensing requirements.

### **Will I need a licence to build a dam?**

A licence is required to construct a new dam that is located on a waterway and any off-waterway dam that could be hazardous in size. Contact Melbourne Water for advice. A planning permit may also be necessary from your local Council.

Melbourne Water recommends you engage an engineer to ensure the proper design and construction of any new dam.

### **When should I contact Melbourne Water about my dam?**

You should contact Melbourne Water for advice on dam issues as well as engage an experienced dam engineer to assess any changes to the condition of the dam that could result in partial or total failure.

Dams can be at a greater risk following extended drought periods where clay walls can dry out and expand. If you are unsure about dam issues or need advice around dam condition, contact Melbourne Water.

### **Do I need a licence to fill my dam?**

Yes. A licence is required to take and use water to fill any dam that is used for irrigation. Such licences are not available in all areas. Check with your water authority.

## **Off-Stream Stock Watering Facilities**

### **How can I receive assistance from the Stream Frontage Management Program to repair my off-stream stock watering facilities?**

We can arrange a site inspection or discuss options for your off-stream watering requirements. Contact your local River Health Partnership Officer or Melbourne Water.

### **What off-stream stock watering facilities can I receive assistance for?**

You can receive assistance to replace materials or undertake works required to re-establish your off-stream stock watering areas.

### **Will Melbourne Water pay to replace my off-stream stock watering infrastructure damaged during the bushfires?**

Financial support for off-stream stock watering facilities is available through Melbourne Water's Stream Frontage Management Program. The level of financial support for infrastructure is by agreement between the landholder and the Stream Frontage Management Program representative.

### **Can I receive funding assistance through the Stream Frontage Management Program as well as claim on my insurance?**

No. Where the replacement of streamside fencing or off-stream stock watering facilities is claimed under property insurance, funding for the same items is not available through the Stream Frontage Management Program.

## **Stream and Dam Water Quality**

### **What can I do to improve the quality of the water I'm using from the stream?**

Water quality can change in fire affected areas. After rainfall, increased sediments from exposed soils may wash into creeks and rivers bringing with it ash, nutrients or other contaminants such as fertilisers.

Melbourne Water recommends that if you plan to use any water from waterways effected by bushfires, you should monitor your water supply source and make alternative arrangements if water quality deteriorates. You should obtain your own testing from an approved laboratory to ensure that the water is fit for its purpose.

Water quality is expected to improve over time, once the catchment and vegetation re-establishes itself. Melbourne Water cannot guarantee the quantity or quality of water that will be available from the stream or within private dams.

### **What should I do if my in-stream water pump out point or in-stream dam is full of silt and sediment?**

Following bushfires, changes to sediment and silt within the stream are likely and may continue into the future.

Contact Melbourne Water to obtain advice on desilting options, alternative pump locations and dam maintenance tips as well as obtaining the required

licence prior to doing any in-stream works.

It is also important that you have alternative water sources in the event of not being able to take water from the stream.

### **What should I do if my dam is not on a waterway but is full of silt and sediment?**

It's important that you're able to manage your future water resources, including having alternative water sources if you are not able to use your dam.

If your dam is full of silt, you can desilt it but it is important to be aware of the following:

- works do not require a licence if the dam is only being desilted;
- works may require a license if the dam is enlarged in any way;
- the storage of extracted silt should not impact waterways or downstream water quality; and
- extracted silt should not form a levee or structure that obstructs water flow.

Before desilting, consider the likelihood of further silting. It may be better to wait until after the catchment has re-established itself.

### **What can I do to help reduce the chances of my dam filling with silt?**

To reduce the chances of sediment entering your dam, you can install sediment fences and guttering to slow down flows or use contour drains or other bypass methods to temporarily direct water around or away from the dam.

## **Contact details**

**Off-stream watering through the Stream Frontage Management Program** – call Melbourne Water's River Health team on 03 9235 2231 or visit [melbournewater.com.au/bushfires](http://melbournewater.com.au/bushfires)

**Dams and diversion issues within the Yarra catchment fire affected area** – call Melbourne Water's Diversions team on 03 9784 6373

**Dams and diversion issues within the Bunyip and Tarago fire affected area** – call Southern Rural Water on 03 5139 3113 for rural dams or 03 5139 3198 for surface water licences

**Dams and diversion issues within the Kinglake and Murrindindi fire affected area** – call Goulburn Murray Water on 03 5833 5500

**Whole farm planning and dam maintenance** – call the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186 or visit [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)

**This fact sheet is also available at** [melbournewater.com.au/bushfires](http://melbournewater.com.au/bushfires)