

Diversions Management Drought Response/Water Sharing Plan

Fact sheet – March 2016

Background

A key objective of licensing is to manage the available water resource equitably and sustainably amongst all users including licence holders and the environment. Water is a scarce resource and Melbourne Water has developed a Drought Response/Water Sharing Plan (DRP) for Licensed Water Users.

The Drought Response/Water Sharing Plan is used by Melbourne Water to qualify rights to water in conjunction with licence conditions. The DRP provides a mechanism to:

- Manage access to water by all users and the environment.
- Define the conditions under which rosters, restrictions or bans on use will be required during low flow conditions and the process by which these will be implemented.

The DRP is in two parts:

- Part A – The main document which sets out the background and conditions that apply to all licence holders.
- Part B – Nineteen catchment-specific Water Sharing Plans. These contain relevant sub-catchment information as well as the restriction/ban triggers that apply to licences issued within the particular sub-catchment. Only one will be relevant for each licence.

What are the main points of the plan?

- The DRP is active at all times in conjunction with licence conditions and requires licence holders to proactively seek and monitor information about waterway status prior to taking any water.
- Restriction trigger levels apply for the Yarra River and the major sub-catchments of Little Yarra River, Woori Yallock Creek and Olinda Creek. Access to water becomes restricted once these triggers are reached.
- Ban trigger levels are defined for all catchments. Access to water under licences for non-exempt activities is banned once these triggers are reached.
- Where flows are subject to rapid change, such as the smaller catchments, restriction levels do not apply and only ban triggers have been set.

- Information on current restrictions and bans is available on Melbourne Water's website (www.melbournewater.com.au/diverters), or by calling the Melbourne Water Customer Support Centre on 131 722.
- Licence holders are expected to check the restriction status of their catchment before taking water under a licence.
- The plan is designed to encourage water users to manage their use appropriately in order to avoid or limit the introduction of bans.
- Bans or restrictions will remain in place until the catchment-specific relief trigger is met.

Obligations

Melbourne Water

- Comply with relevant statutory and legislative obligations, including the need to protect the environment
- Manage drought and low flow conditions in accordance with relevant Stream-flow Management Plans and Local Management Rules where applicable
- Maintain and implement the drought response plan as required
- Communicate openly with licensed water users, industry groups and stakeholders

Water users

- Comply with licensed volume and conditions
- Understand and comply with the Drought Response Plan
- Comply with applicable Stream-flow Management Plans or Local Management Plans where they exist
- Observe minimum Stream-flows
- Proactively seek and monitor information about low flow and drought status
- Prepare individual drought contingencies and manage own water use during times of drought conditions
- Contact Melbourne Water for clarification and/or advice if uncertain about any aspect of water resource management.

Further information

Melbourne Water can be contacted by:

- Calling during business hours on 131 722
- Writing to PO Box 4342, Melbourne VIC 3001
- Emailing enquiry@melbwater.com.au