



StreamNews

A bulletin for Melbourne Water diverters
Issue 31 - November 2024

Your diversion service

We are inviting all diversion licence holders to have their say on water services and charges to be applied from 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2031, as part of our 2026 Price Submission to the Essential Services Commission. Complete the survey to tell us the level of service you want from us.

To ensure our 2026 Price Submission reflects your needs, we are asking all water licensees to complete a survey on the water diversions services we provide you. Tell us what service levels you prefer, and the prices you are willing to pay for these services.

How was the survey compiled?

Over recent months, we have sought initial feedback on preferences for our water diversions services into the future via customer interviews, discussions with the Diversions Management Advisory Committees, and our regular periodic telephone surveys.

We have used this feedback to develop three options for diversion management services from 2026 to 2031. The options consider our statutory obligations relating to meter coverage and managing water entitlements. All three options aim to minimise price increases in line with our continued commitment to customer value.

We encourage all licensees to complete the survey so we can understand the complete range of preferences on the water diversions service options.

We will report the survey results in a future edition of *StreamNews*. When approved, new diversions charges will apply from 1 July 2026.

Complete the survey using the QR Code

The survey will close on:
Sunday 10 November 2024



You can also complete the survey here:

https://melbwater.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b179DXslHid0v1s or by calling the Diversions Team on 131 722 or email diversions@melbournewater.com.au

Melbourne Water 2026 Price Submission

Every five years Victorian water corporations prepare a price submission. This is a five-year plan outlining water prices, service standards, infrastructure and operational investments. In September 2025, Melbourne Water will submit its price submission to the Essential Services Commission (ESC), the independent regulator responsible for promoting the interests of consumers. The ESC will determine the final prices Melbourne Water can charge.



Environmental water update

Vegetation surveys were undertaken at Yering backswamp in December 2023. Yering Backswamp is a wetland site of biological significance located near Yarra Glen.

Yering Backswamp receives annual environmental watering from the Yarra Environmental Entitlement to sustain rare and threatened plant species on site. Assessment of the vegetation survey results have been used to inform the development of a new 5 year management plan for the site, which has now been completed and informs watering actions in the current 2024/25 water year. Overall, the vegetation surveys and assessment found environmental watering has promoted wetland vegetation to a high quality condition, as well as sustaining habitat for a diversity of native wetland bird and frog species.

Bird surveys have also been conducted by Birdlife Australia and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation's Narrap Rangers across the lower and middle Yarra (*Birrarung*) billabongs. Data analysis is currently underway. Additionally, Narrap Rangers and the University of Melbourne have conducted vegetation, frog and environmental DNA surveys in these billabongs.

Maribyrnong Flows Study update

We are currently updating the environmental flow recommendations for the Maribyrnong catchment including the Maribyrnong River, Jacksons Creek, Riddells Creek, Deep Creek and Emu Creek. Environmental flow recommendations help us understand what creatures are using our waterways such as fish, frogs and platypus and the flows they need to survive and stay healthy.

Environmental watering information



We deliver water on behalf of the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. We continue to monitor the river conditions and will provide updates as we deliver the Seasonal Watering Plan www.vewh.vic.gov.au/watering-program/seasonal-watering-plan

Water theft enforcement

Water is a precious and limited resource, so it's important that everyone has fair access to it.

Water theft affects everyone in your community – and the environment. Effective and strong compliance ensures fair access for all water users, protecting those who do the right thing and encouraging community confidence in diversion licensing. Victoria's Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) have released their metering framework as well as a compliance and enforcement policy.

The policy will be linked to Melbourne Water's current enforcement and compliance procedures and aligns to the Victorian Governments zero tolerance approach to water theft. In addition, changes to the Water Act and Regulations enable Water Corporations to issue fines (Penalty Infringement Notices- PINs) for breaches of the Water Act or Regulations as prescribed in the Water (infringements) Regulations 2020.

We worked closely with the DEECA and Fines Victoria to implement and finalise this functionality through the 2023/24 financial year. Melbourne Water appointed two Authorised Water Officers who are authorised to issue Penalty Infringement Notices in the 2023/2024 financial year. We intend to appoint additional AWOs in the 2024/25 financial year to further enhance our compliance capability.

With this in mind we aim to increase our presence in the field in a compliance role in line with our obligations under the Act, with any breaches dealt with effectively.

FURTHER INFORMATION



Additional information regarding our compliance approach including fact sheets can be found on our compliance page on our website melbournewater.com.au/waterteft

ZERO tolerance on water theft

So there is an even playing field for everyone.
melbournewater.com.au/waterteft





Wandin Yallock Creek



Rural Land Program

The Rural Land Program provides assistance and funding opportunities for landholders to undertake works that will keep soil and nutrients on their farm and out of waterways.

The program has been designed to help landholders improve on-farm management practices through financial and technical assistance. Benefits include increased productivity for the property owner and improved waterway health for the broader community.

The Rural Land Program is about improving the management of water sensitive areas such as:

- waterways
- drains and dams
- wetlands
- gullies
- low-lying and seasonally wet areas

The Rural Land Program is available to landholders who own or manage rural land in these catchments:

- Woori Yallock, Wandin Yallock, Olinda, Stringybark, Yering, Hoddles Creek and Little Yarra
- Upper Jacksons, Upper Deep Creek and Upper Werribee
- Upper Bass, Lang Lang and Tarago

MORE INFORMATION



For more details on the services offered through the Rural Land Program contact Melbourne Water's Rural Land Officer Rowan Hore on **0428 709 708** or email rowan.hore@melbournewater.com.au

Safe access to meters

The health, safety and wellbeing of our people is our number one priority. Good access to water meters improves the safety for our customers, staff and contractors and the breakdown response time is improved if we can access the site quickly and safely.

Some reasons why we may not be able to safely access the meter on your property include:

- Dogs or livestock
- Vegetation or rubbish around your meter area (snake/spider hazard)
- Debris such as rocks, farm equipment laying in the area, pipework that has been installed at or near ground level
- Ruts created from heavy machinery or works around the meter site creating uneven ground surface
- Locked gates and meter boxes
- Meters are located in a flood-prone area
- The approach road or track is dangerous
- Hot electric fences

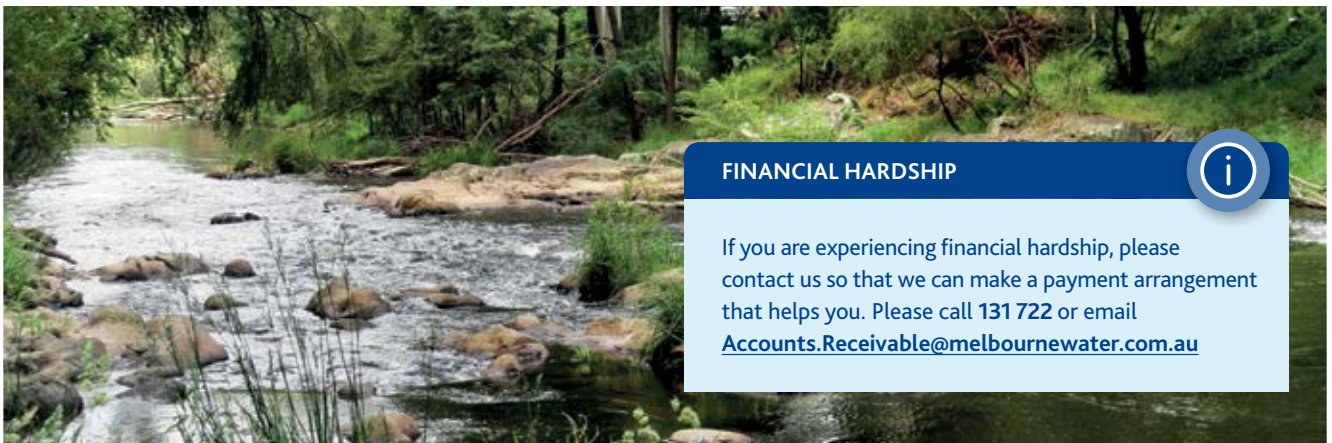
Some helpful tips

Pumps/Machinery

Make sure that any moving parts i.e., belts are isolated or protected from access and that they have appropriate guards are in place e.g., belts, pulleys and shafts. Any oil spills to be banded under pumps and remote start pumps are identified at the meter.

Biosecurity sites

Make sure the contact numbers or any directions to your office or appropriate location are clearly visible on the biosecurity signs.



FINANCIAL HARDSHIP



If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact us so that we can make a payment arrangement that helps you. Please call **131 722** or email Accounts.Receivable@melbournewater.com.au

Metering program

As part of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's metering framework for Victoria's non-urban irrigation meters, it is a requirement that all Water Corporations meters comply with Australian Standard AS4747 and have telemetry to record and transmit readings installed by 2025. We continue to set the benchmark for metering standards and implementation across the state.

We have been implementing a program of meter upgrades to AS4747 and installing telemetry over the last 5 years as part of our capital upgrade program. 100% of our meter fleet that is required to meet the state-wide plan currently meets AS4747 and National Measurement Institute - NMI-10. Over the last 12 months, we have installed over 50 new compliant meters as part of our capital upgrade program.

We are well placed to meet the requirements and timeline that Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action has set. We are currently installing state of the art AS4747 and NMI-10 compliant, Siemens MAG8000 Electromagnetic and Arad Octave Ultrasonic meters. These new meters provide benefits to both us and our customers. They provide the best possible reliability, ease of operation and longevity, and most importantly accuracy, giving a 0.2% accuracy compared to 5% with old mechanical meters.

This means that our customers can be confident that they are taking the correct amount of water with less losses due to meter error. We are continuing to roll out installation upgrades of our telemetry system which employs both radio and 4G technology. Over the next 12 months, we plan to install an additional 250 telemetry units on meters. With this network, we can remotely review live meter data to ensure compliance with licence conditions as well as receiving alerts for over-use, taking during bans and meter errors. Customers will also be able to access their meter data remotely.

We will continue to investigate and trial new methods of technology for our telemetry network to ensure robust and reliable data for our customers and Melbourne Water.



Image courtesy of Doug Gimsey

Minor licence amendment – new online form coming soon

Melbourne Water is transforming our Change of details/Minor Licence Amendment Form into an online form enabling our customers to complete the entire application process including obtaining the required signatures in one online application.

This is another step towards transitioning our paper-based forms into a digital form and providing a streamlined process for both our customers and Diversions Team. We hope to go live with this new online form by June 2025.

FLEXIBLE PAYMENT OPTIONS



Melbourne Water offers payment support and flexibility to suit your situation. We have a number of ways to help you pay your bill. If you are experiencing financial difficulty, we're here to help. For more options call us 131 722 and find out how we can help you.

Diversions Management Advisory Committee

Melbourne Water convenes a Customer Advisory Committee for Diversions customers to provide feedback to Melbourne Water on a range of issues relating to diversions management.

The committee also assists Melbourne Water in the development and review of policies and procedures regarding diversions management likely to impact on the interests of diverters, the environment and the broader community.

It is expected that no more than 3 meetings per year, generally convened within normal business hours, would be required.

If you are interested in being on the committee, please contact the Diversions Team at diversions@melbournewater.com.au

Get to know your Diversions Team



Sarah Gaskill
Service Lead Water Resources and Compliance

Adam Roszak
Senior Diversions Officer

Peter Theoharakos
Diversions Officer (Authorised Water Officer)

Tyson Hills – Diversions Officer

The team are available to assist in any matter relating to Diversions Management and can be contacted directly through our Customer Call Centre on 131722 or through diversions@melbournewater.com.au



Little Yarra River



Bass Coast landscape

Stream Flow Management Plans Annual Report

Melbourne Water is responsible for managing 1,782 surface water diverters in the Yarra catchment, parts of the lower Maribyrnong River and some creeks in the western catchments.

Waterways and catchments that are considered ecologically important and where water supply is considered under stress may be declared as Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) by the Minister for Water. Currently there are seven catchments in the Yarra River basin that are declared WSPAs. Under the *Victorian Water Act 1989*, Melbourne Water must develop and manage Stream Flow Management Plans for the WSPAs.

These plans help Melbourne Water ensure that the water resources of the relevant WSPA are managed in an equitable manner for the long-term sustainability of those resources.

To understand the effectiveness of the implementation of SFMPs, Melbourne Water is required to undertake Annual Reporting on each of its plans and a more comprehensive review of each plan every 5 years.

The SFMP Annual Report for the water year 2023–24 covers seven catchments in the Yarra River Basin: Hoddles Creek, Little Yarra and Don Rivers, Olinda Creek, Plenty River, Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks, Stringybark Creek, and Woori Yallock Creek.

Stream flow in the SFMP catchments were generally lower in 2023–24 than in recent years, reflecting the decreased rainfalls experienced across the Yarra Basin. Due to lower rainfall there was an observed increase in extracted volumes in most catchments and an increase in the number of days with bans in place.

Our SFMP Annual Report 2023–24 has been finalised in consultation with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and will be available on the Melbourne Water website in November.

Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways

Do you own or manage land and or waterways in the Melbourne Water and Westernport Catchment area? You may be eligible for a financial incentive through the Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways program.

What can incentives be used for?

Incentives are available for many activities that support the objectives of the *Healthy Waterways Strategy*, including fencing, revegetation and weed control. The assistance extends beyond the waterway or dam, including the management and supply of native vegetation, water tanks and troughs, land class fencing, farm access tracks to reduce sediment runoff, nutrient management, erosion control, farm/property management plans in priority areas, education and technical advice.

Who can apply for an incentive?

Preference is given to projects that fall in the priority areas, shown on our interactive map. The program is open to anyone, including residential and commercial landowners, local government and public agencies, as well as schools and community groups who are committed to improving their local waterways and delivering multiple liveability benefits for the community.

How do I find out more?

Visit our website for full program information www.melbournewater.com.au/services/grants/liveable-communities-liveable-waterways-program

Please call our Customer Service Centre on 131 722 or email incentives@melbournewater.com.au

Do we have your correct contact details?



Please email diversions@melbournewater.com.au or call the Diversions Team on 131 722 to update your contact details on our records. This will ensure you never miss out on important information regarding your licence.

Dam Safety - Time to check your dam

A dam is a valuable asset on any farm, providing essential stock or irrigation water supplies and should be regularly inspected during the year as part of preventative maintenance. Dam failure not only leads to expensive repair bills; it also means lost production while the dam is repaired.

If you are a dam owner, we suggest that you include enhanced inspection and monitoring programs, cleaning spillways and outlet pipes to pass flood water, review of emergency response procedures and the repair of any cracks and other defects prior to re-filling.



Image courtesy of Doug Gimsey

You can carry out routine maintenance works on a dam without requiring a licence providing the works are limited to:

1. Clearing out weeds
2. Removing vegetation from the dam wall
3. Minor works to repair erosion damage on the crest, embankment or spillway
4. Maintenance of the compensation pipe

Any works that put at risk the integrity of a dam will require a works licence and are not considered routine maintenance.

This type of work includes:

- Any alteration to the capacity or wall height
- Modification of the crest, spillway, and compensation pipe
- Reconstruction of the dam wall due to damage
- Repairs that result in a disturbance to the embankment – such as removing a section of the embankment to replace or repair a compensation pipe

RESOURCE ACCESS



To access further resources please visit:

Victoria State Government's Dam Safety Guide Notes
Dam safety guidance (water.vic.gov.au)

Please visit the Bureau of Meteorology for alerts
www.bom.gov.au/climate/enso/outlook

It would be appreciated if you plan to do any maintenance works of your dam or dams that you first contact Melbourne Water on 131 722.

Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator

The Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (SAF) is a designated central contact point for farmers, landholders, industry, and community groups to support sustainable agriculture practices in Port Phillip and Western Port region.

At Melbourne Water, this role engages and informs agricultural industries and farmers about climate-smart, sustainable agriculture practices – including best practice natural resource management, biodiversity, and practices that support emissions reduction and build climate resilience on-farm. The SAF supports the delivery of sustainable agriculture projects in the region, including EcoVineyards, Carbon Farming Outreach Program, and future climate smart agriculture project delivery.

Interested landholders can find more information on the Melbourne Water Climate Smart Agriculture website: <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-and-environment/land-and-catchments/climate-smart-agriculture>

For access to agriculture factsheets, the Ag-Resilience Podcast, and to stay up to date with SAF activities and projects, please follow the Ag-Resilience Community Hub: <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-and-environment/land-and-catchments/climate-smart-agriculture>

For more details on the services offered, please contact Melbourne Water's Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (SAF) Karen Thomas on 0427 480 170 or email karen.thomas@melbournewater.com.au

Keep up to date with what's happening



For more information about the information in this newsletter or our other activities please call the Diversions Team on 131 722 or visit Melbourne Water's Waterway Diversions www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/waterway-diversions



For an interpreter, please call the
Translating and Interpreting Service
(TIS National) on 13 14 50

