



StreamNews

A bulletin for Melbourne Water diverters
Issue 30 - November 2023



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 this functionality through the 2022/23 financial year.

Melbourne Water recently appointed two Authorised Water Officers who are authorised to issue Penalty Infringement Notices in the

2023/2024 financial year. In July, a Penalty Infringement Notices fact sheet was sent to customers outlining, what a Penalty Infringement Notice is, who can be fined, what offences can be fined and who has the power to issue fines.

We have a responsibility to our customers to ensure all water usage is within licence conditions and that breaches of the Water Act are fully investigated. 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

VICTORIA
Government



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. Over 95% of our meter fleet currently meets AS4747 and National Measurement Institute - NMI-10.

Over the last 12 months, we have installed over 130 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 two years, we plan to install an additional 200 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.

Transfer of Water Entitlement Upon Sale of land and Trade Water Entitlement Applications – now online

Our 'Transfer of Water Entitlement Licence Upon Sale of land and Trade Water Entitlement' applications have been transformed 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 our Diversions team.

Applications can be made here:

Melbourne Water Trade Water Entitlement

apply.melbournewater.com.au/diversion/TradewaterEntitlement.html

Melbourne Water Transfer of Water Entitlement Upon Sale of Land

apply.melbournewater.com.au/diversion/LicenseTransfer.html

Stream Flow Management Plan Annual Report

Melbourne Water is responsible for managing 1,810 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 waterways in the Yarra River basin that are declared WSPAs. Under the Victorian Water Act 1989 and Melbourne Water develops Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMPs) for the WSPAs or water stressed catchments in the Yarra River Basin.



The Yarra River. Image courtesy of Doug Gimesy.



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 2022-23 covers seven waterways and sub-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.

Climate conditions were favourable in 2022-23 and stream flows were recorded higher than in average years for all SFMP catchments. Extracted volumes were slightly less than dryer years due to a limited need to augment natural rainfalls. A reduction in the number of days on bans and restrictions across the catchments was also less due to wet conditions.

Our SFMP Annual Report 2022-23 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

Melbourne Water is excited to share our new incentives program – Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways. Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways is an evolution of our existing grant programs with a stronger focus on innovation, liveability and collaboration across all areas of water management. It brings together several successful Melbourne Water grant programs into a single streamlined application process.

Melbourne Water is making the incentives program more flexible to accommodate the needs of our customers and community allowing for increased partnership opportunities. Allowing our customers and community to take action on a broader range of emerging challenges.

Private land managers and owners are now able to apply for a broader range of funding opportunities for holistic projects under the new program.

Activities funded under the Stream Frontage and Rural Land Programs continue to be funded under the new program. The increased flexibility of Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways allow you to apply and start your activity at any time during the year.

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.

MORE INFORMATION



If you would like to obtain more information, please get in touch via our Customer Service Centre on **131 722**, email incentives@melbournewater.com.au, or contact your Waterways and Land Officer.

Image courtesy of Doug Gimesy



Image courtesy of Doug Gimesy





Image courtesy of Doug Gimesy



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 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



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 Gimesy

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**.





Fyke nets were set at Bolin Bolin Billabong the night before tagging to catch eels. Following the tagging all eels were safely returned to the billabong.



Environmental water monitoring update

We've been monitoring eel movement to help understand their migration timing at Bolin Bolin Billabong. Bolin Bolin Billabong is located on the lower Yarra near Bulleen. The billabong is highly valued for ecological, cultural and liveability attributes.

In August scientists from Arthur Rylah Institute, Wurundjeri Narrap Crew members, and Melbourne Water staff met on site to tag 13 eels. These eels are atadromous (meaning they move between freshwater and the sea during their lifetime).

The tags help us track and understand eel movement and migrating in our river systems. Downstream migrations of adult eels are potentially influenced by many factors, including river flows, water temperature, time of year and moon phase. After tagging all eels are safely returned to the billabong.

We know from earlier surveys that 10 eels (tagged as part of the project last year) have moved out of the billabong and into the Birrarung (Yarra River) to commence their epic journey towards the Coral Sea to spawn.

Importantly, this work will help assess the outcomes of environmental water management as well as inform watering decisions.



Image courtesy of Doug Gimesy

Environmental watering information



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

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**

