



Stream Flow Management Plan Annual Report 2023-24

Annual report for Melbourne Waters Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMPs): Hoddles Creek, Little Yarra and Don Rivers, Olinda Creek, Plenty River, Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks, Stringybark Creek, Woori Yallock Creek.

September 2024

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

We acknowledge the Victorian Traditional Owners and their Elders past and present as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to the ongoing living culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Foreword

Melbourne Water is pleased to present our Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMPs) annual report for the 2023-24 water year. This annual report is a consolidated report for seven river systems in the Yarra River Basin specifically the Hoddles Creek, Little Yarra and Don Rivers, Olinda Creek, Plenty River, Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks, Stringybark Creek, and Woori Yallock Creek.

Melbourne Water is responsible for the implementation, administration and enforcement of the SFMPs (the Plans) as approved by the Minister administering the Victorian Water Act 1989.

This report provides an overview of the surface water management activities relating to the implementation, administration and enforcement of each SFMPs in the seven creeks and waterways of the Yarra River basin during the 2023-24 water year.

This report has been prepared and submitted to the Minister for Water in accordance with section 32C of the Victorian Water Act 1989.

A copy of this report is available on the Melbourne Water Website.

Executive Summary

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 are declared as Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) by the Minister for Water. Currently there are seven catchments in the Yarra River Basin that fall under WSPAs. Under the Victorian Water Act 1989 (the Act), Melbourne Water is required to develop and implement Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMPs) (the plans) for the WSPAs or water stressed catchments.

The objective of the plans is to ensure that the water resources in the relevant WSPAs are managed in an equitable manner for the long-term sustainability of those resources.

The seven catchments in the Yarra River Basin which have SFMP's are:

1. Hoddles Creek
2. Little Yarra and Don Rivers
3. Olinda Creek
4. Plenty River
5. Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks
6. Stringybark Creek
7. Woori Yallock Creek

Section 32C of the Victorian Water Act requires Melbourne Water to prepare an Annual Report for each approved SFMP and to submit to the Minister for Water (The Minister) and the relevant Catchment Management Authority by 30 September each year.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the surface water status and summarises the surface water management activities undertaken in accordance with the Plans during the 2023-24 water year (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024). This report also summarises the performance of reportable prescriptions for the seven individual plans. The specific details of each plan's prescriptions are

included in a separate SFMPs 'annual report 2023-24 supplementary data files' with a detailed compliance table for each plan. A secondary table of summary statistics for volumetric allowances, bans and rosters and volumetric use from metered licences is also included for each plan. The SFMP 'annual report 2023-24 supplementary data file' is supplied to the Minister for Water together with this annual report. The annual report and associated supplementary data files can be accessed at the Melbourne Water [Website](#) and are made available to public upon request by advertising in the Herald Sun Newspaper and social media posts.

In developing this year's annual report, Melbourne Water has consulted with the Water and Catchments Group within Department of Energy Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). Melbourne Water also worked closely throughout the year with the Diversions Management Advisory Committee (which include representatives from peak diverter groups) engaged in managing stream flows and protecting the environment.

Melbourne Water continues to work with the Traditional Owners in the area (Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation), and has kept them informed of the progress and performance of the plans. Melbourne Water continues to engage with DEECA to ensure that any future formal reviews of the plans which require the establishment of a consultative committee includes a Wurundjeri representative as per Section 29 of the Victorian Water Act 1989.

Stream flow in the catchments covered by this report 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.

Licensed allocation caps¹ for each catchment are defined within the plans Prescriptions. The Woori Yallock Creek SFMP is the only catchment with current licenced allocation volumes greater than the licenced allocation cap volume.

Melbourne Water manages access to water and stream flows to protect key environmental values through the implementation of bans and restrictions across the catchments which are set out in

¹ It has been also identified that previous years reporting had under reported the Allocation cap and allocation volume for the Steels, Pauls and Dixons creek SFMP. This has been updated in this report as shown in Table 1.

licence conditions. If real time daily flow data shows low flows in the waterways in any of the seven SFMPs, Melbourne Water notifies licence holders on bans and restrictions through direct SMS messaging. Information on bans and restrictions is available on the Melbourne Water Website, updated daily.

There are two compliance exceptions in the SFMPs' prescriptions that continually carry over from previous years. Melbourne Water has previously investigated the feasibility of implementing these prescriptions with the following outcomes:

1. For the Plenty catchment (prescription 14: Installing Meters) it was determined the cost disproportionately outweighed the benefit of installing meters on dams in the Plenty River system. Meters have been fitted to all active commercial or irrigation licensees' equipment greater than 5ML which does not include all registered farm dams. The investigation and outcomes have been reported in previous annual reports.
 2. For Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks (prescription 16: Rosters), the hydraulic nature of the creeks shows rapid rise and fall of stream levels, and due to this characteristic the implementation of rosters was deemed unworkable as a management practice. This outcome has also been reported in previous Annual Reports.
- No formal reviews were required during the current reporting period. However, three Plans are currently undergoing review and the findings will be reported in the 2024/25 Annual Report. These catchments are Little Yarra and Don Rivers, Olinda Creek and Woori Yallock Creek SFMPs.

Melbourne Water continues to undertake legislative renewal and has updated our Compliance and Enforcement Policy to reflect the changes in the Victorian Water Act. We also:

- participated in an Independent Review of our Compliance and Enforcement policies, systems and processes, as part of the Victorian Government's activities to improve compliance and enforcement across the state.
- revised our Metering Action Plan which aims to upgrade and expand our metering fleet to AS4747 compliant meters and expand our telemetry network to increase real time access to usage data. Rollout of our Metering Action Plan has progressed well ahead of schedule and we currently have 100% of total required meter fleet compliant with the Victorian Metering Policy.

- are participating in the State-wide Licencing review to update the licensing guidelines under Priority Area 8 of the Groundwater 2030 statement of priorities.

The Plenty River SFMP has been identified for revocation and to be replaced with a Local Management Plan. Melbourne Water has initiated the process to abolish the Plenty River WSPA and revoke the SFMP. It is expected that the formal request to the Minister will occur in 2025.

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Glossary

Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Actions (DEECA)

State Government department responsible for overseeing the Victorian *Water Act 1989* and associated policy. Prior 1st Jan 2023, DEECA was termed as DELWP.

Licensed Allocation Cap

The total volume of licensed entitlement set in a Water Supply Protection Area prescription. In some SFMPs this was set at the licence volume at the time of plan approval, whilst in others it was set at a level that would allow an 80% reliability of supply.

Local Management Plan (LMP)

Local management plans are non-statutory plans created for areas with a lower level of demand than Water Supply Protection Area catchments. They set the rules to share water within the relevant sub-catchments.

Local Management Rules (LMR)

Local management rules are created for areas with a lower level of demand than LMP catchments. They also set the rules to share water within the relevant sub-catchments. (less prescriptive than a LMP)

Stream Flow Management Plan (SFMP)

A statutory plan developed under the *Water Act 1989* to make sure that the water resources of the relevant water supply protection area are managed in an equitable manner and so as to ensure the long-term sustainability of those resources.

Water Supply Protection Area (WSPA)

An area declared by the Minister for Water which is set aside to protect the water resources through the development of a statutory management plan. The Water Supply Protection Area may cover groundwater, surface water or both resources.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

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 are declared as Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) by the Minister for Water. Currently there are seven catchments in the Yarra River basin that fall under WSPAs. Under the Victorian Water Act 1989 (the Act), Melbourne Water is required to develop Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMP) (plans) for the WSPAs or water stressed catchments.

The objective of the SFMPs, developed by a committee appointed by the Minister, is to ensure that the water resources of the relevant WSPA are managed in an equitable manner for the long-term sustainability of those resources.

SFMPs also:

- recognise the needs of existing and future users whilst aiming to maintain or improve waterway health by protecting minimum flows for the environment. Providing sufficient environmental flows to achieve healthy rivers is a key component in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the water resource.
- considers the amount of water set aside in a WSPA (usually an entire catchment) and prescribes how it will be shared between water users and the environment. It aims to recognise the needs of existing and future water users whilst maintaining waterway's health by protecting environmental flows.

Section 32C of the Act requires Melbourne Water to prepare an Annual Report for each approved SFMP. The Act also requires Melbourne Water to submit an Annual Report (this document) to the

Minister for Water and the relevant Catchment Management Authority² for each approved plan by 30 September each year.

This Annual Report provides an overview of the surface water status and summarises the surface water management activities undertaken relating to the implementation, administration and enforcement of each Plan during the 2023-24 water year (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024).

The report summarises key reporting obligations, described in this report as ‘reportable prescriptions’ for the individual plans. The number of prescriptions range between eight and twenty eight per plan varying with relevant complexity and were developed through the consultative phase for each individual plan development.

The specific details of prescriptions in each plan are included in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file with a detailed compliance table for each plan. A secondary table of summary statistics for volumetric allowances, bans and rosters and volumetric use from metered licences are also included. The SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file is supplied to the Minister for Water together with this Annual Report. The SFMP Annual Report for 2023-24 and The SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file are also available on the Melbourne Water [website](#).

1.2 Water Supply Protection Areas

To manage water sharing and diversion management of its unregulated catchments, Melbourne Water uses i) Stream Flow Management Plans, ii) Local Management Plans, iii) Local Management Rules and iv) Drought Response Plans - to develop water management strategy across its management area to ensure water is shared fairly between diverters and the environment in order to comply with the Victorian Water Act 1989. Catchments and waterways that are ecologically important and are water stressed, are declared as Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs). WSPAs require a statutory enforcement for the sustainable management of healthy waterways and catchments – thus specific SFMPs have been developed for individual rivers and creeks in the Yarra catchment where a WSPA has been declared. For some other catchments which are less stressed,

² Since the amalgamation of the Port Phillip and Western Port Catchment Management Authority with Melbourne Water, the requirement to submit the Annual Report to the relevant CMA is no longer applicable.

Melbourne Water has also developed Local Management Plans (LMPs) and Local Management Rules (LMRs)³.

During drought or low flow conditions, licensed diverters access to water may be restricted or banned to protect the environment. Melbourne Water's Drought Response Plan/Water Sharing Plan is active at all times, and specifies how water is shared when there is not enough to meet all users' needs. Melbourne Water monitors river flow levels in the specified catchments and triggers restrictions or bans in case of low flow.

SFMPs outline the catchment descriptions and ecological values within them. They contain statutory prescriptions that cover requirements such as water sharing and trade rules, stipulations for metering of licences and rules regarding dams used for take and use within the various catchments. SFMPs also contain rules around cease to take, bans, and restrictions based on stream flow levels. The SFMP prescriptions vary and are specific for each waterway in the Yarra River Basin. There is a monitoring requirement as part of SFMPs.

Melbourne Water has supported the development and approval of seven SFMPs, in the Yarra River basin which are the focus of this Annual Report (Figure 1):

1. Hoddles Creek
2. Little Yarra and Don Rivers
3. Olinda Creek
4. Plenty River
5. Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks
6. Stringybark Creek
7. Woori Yallock Creek

³ A copy of the SFMP's, the Diamond Creek LMP and the Local Management Rules can be downloaded from the Melbourne Water Website: [Stream flow management | Melbourne Water](#)

Figure 1. Stream Flow Management Plan and Local Management Plan catchments in the Melbourne Water region.



1.3 Consultation

Melbourne Water has consulted with a range of groups in the preparation of the 2023-24 Annual Report and on the implementation of the SFMPs, including several teams within the Water and Catchments Group within Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA).

Melbourne Water continues to work with the Traditional Owners in the area, Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation (Wurundjeri) and has kept the Traditional Owners informed of the progress and performance of the plans. Melbourne Water has commenced engagement with the Wurundjeri group and DEECA to ensure that any formal reviews of the plans which require the establishment of a consultative committee includes Wurundjeri representation as per Section 29 of the Victorian Water Act.

In alignment with Water for Victoria, Melbourne Water informs Traditional Owners of all the current opportunities to engage in managing the water cycle through our Traditional Owner Relationship Manager. Major strategic opportunities also exist through the implementation of the Healthy Waterways Strategy, Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy, Greater Melbourne Urban Water System Strategy and Melbourne Sewerage Strategy. Melbourne Water also supports the Traditional Owners in achieving the aspirations of the Water is Life strategy.

Wurundjeri have identified a number of priority projects that they wish to pursue at present and are listed in the Yarra Strategic Plan. Current projects Melbourne Water are working with Wurundjeri (Narrap team) include condition monitoring of billabongs along the Birrarung,

discussion around landscape watering decisions and ecological monitoring opportunities along the Birrarung such as Eels and fish.

2. Surface Water Management

2.1 Licensed allocation volume

A limit on surface water entitlement volume, known as a Permissible Consumptive Volume (PCV), for the Yarra River Basin has been set by the Minister at 435,982 mega litres per year (ML/year) (Government of Victoria, 2010). This PCV includes the volume allocated for urban water supply as well as for licensed diverters. The individual WSPA catchments located within the greater Yarra Basin have their own specific Licensed Allocation Caps (allocation caps) associated with them as a subset of the Yarra PCV. All plans are operating within their allocation caps with the exception of Woori Yallock creek.

Woori Yallock Creek

When the Woori Yallock entitlement cap was established (2009), the existing permanent allocation exceeded the cap which is based on providing 80% reliability to licensed users. To address over-allocation, all permanent and temporary trades occurring in the Woori Yallock catchment are reduced by 20% to continually drive the total volume licenced below the cap and bring the plan into full compliance. This year the allocated volumes reported for Woori Yallock reflect the current permanent allocations and therefore are higher than in previous years where reporting had included temporary trades out of the system.

The current allocation caps and licensed volumes are outlined in Table 1 against the individual WSPAs which take into account temporary trades in and out of the catchments. Further information is also available in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.

Table 1 Surface water licensed allocated volume in all WSPA's as at 30 June 2024

Water Supply Protection Area (WSPA)	WSPA allocation cap (ML)	Allocated Volumes (ML)	Difference (ML)
Hoddles Creek	1,207	674	-533
Little Yarra and Dons River	1,502	1426	-76
Olinda Creek	1,260	706	-554
Plenty River	669	650	-19
Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks	1,874 (Total)	1,792	-82
	1,178 All-Year (inc Farm Dams)	1,163	-15
	696 Winter-Fill	629	-67
Stringybark Creek	2,664	2,579	-85
Woori Yallock Creek	8,828 (Total)	9045	+217
	4030 (Winter-Fill)	1434	-2596

2.2 Bans & Rosters

Melbourne Water oversees equitable water sharing of diverters and the environment within the seven SFMPs during dry periods through a schedule of bans and rosters. These are notified to licence holders through direct SMS messaging and is available on the Melbourne Water Website, updated daily. As the stream flows approach the total ban threshold (designed to protect instream values at critical low flow periods) some catchments have specific rostering prescriptions that allow a sharing arrangement between users on specific days of the week. This helps manage the interaction of water users impacts between themselves and also eases the transition down to critical low flows. These bans and rosters ensure that the equitable sharing between diverters is managed as stream flows begin to recede from typical high flow periods. Information for each SFMPs bans and rosters is available in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.

2.3 Metering of Surface Water Use

Melbourne Water has implemented a metering program to ensure the effective management of condition of the licences, take and use rules in WSPAs. This section on the metering of surface water

use reports on the volumes metered as taken and used during the 2023-24 water year. Australian standard compliant AS4747 meters have been installed on licences with an annual licence volume greater than 5 ML. The volume of licences metered within a specific WSPA is outlined for the specific SFMP catchments in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.

It is assumed that all unmetered active diverters (those with an annual licence of less than 5 ML) are taking and using water in a similar manner and pattern of behaviour to the metered users, reflecting crop growth rates and watering requirements. This, therefore assumes a uniform pattern of response to antecedent conditions of dry periods requiring more supplemental irrigation water compared to periods of high precipitation requiring less irrigation demand. Information relating to the number of licences for each SFMPs and annual usage are given in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.



Photo: Doug Gimesy

2.4 Licence Transfers

Melbourne Water manages the permanent and temporary trade of licences throughout the seven SFMPs in the Yarra River basin. All trades are reviewed during the application process to determine the potential risks to instream values by transferring an irrigation demand from one location to another. Further restrictions and specific catchment rules are summarised in the individual plans available on the Melbourne Water Website.

The plans allow licence holders to temporarily or permanently transfer allocation licence volume within or outside of the WSPAs. Within the Yarra Catchment there was permanent trade of 241.4 ML all within their respective WSPA, temporary trade within a WSPA of 152.6 ML, and 75 ML of temporary trade to outside a WSPA.

Surface water licence transfer activity during 2023-24 is available in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.

2.5 Licence Compliance

Compliance actions are undertaken in accordance with Melbourne Water's Compliance and Enforcement Strategy. Melbourne Water takes a risk based approach looking at impacts and consequences against evidence and other information available. Compliance approaches are focussed on education and informal warnings for first or low volume offenders, escalating through formal written warnings, issuing of Penalty Infringement Notices and notices to prosecution for more serious offences.

The majority of unauthorised take cases tend to relate to only small volumes or percentage unauthorised take against licenced allocation volumes as genuine operator error. At this stage they are potential breaches until a full investigation is undertaken to ensure errors such as faulty meters have been eliminated. The severity of each suspected breach is assessed against the compliance procedure and appropriate responses will be undertaken.

2.5.1 Compliance and Enforcement Actions

Compliance and enforcement actions undertaken by Melbourne Water during 2023-24 for the 27 potential breaches are summarised in **Table 2**. Melbourne Water will continue to engage with licence holders to ensure they are aware of their responsibility to comply with their licence conditions, including Melbourne Water's obligations under the Act to assess water use compliance.

Table 2: Compliance and Enforcement actions undertaken by Melbourne Water in 2023-24

Water Protection (WSPA)	Supply Area	Detected unauthorised takes	Under Investigation	Investigated No further action	Formal warning	Formal interview
Hoddles Creek		0	0	0	0	0
Little Yarra and Don River		0	0	0	0	0
Olinda Creek		0	0	0	0	0
Plenty River		0	0	0	0	0
Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks		0	0	0	0	0
Stringybark Creek		8	5	2	1	0
Woori Yallock Creek		19	3	12	4	0

2.5.2 Compliance and Enforcement Policy

In 2020, Melbourne Water updated its Water and Land Enforcement Policy to match the guidelines as directed by DEECA. This policy outlines the key principles and minimum standards for fair and consistent enforcement within Melbourne Water’s Service Delivery - Waterways and Catchment Services and is intended to inform everyone including those who administer the legislation how enforcement will be carried out.

The policy is aimed at providing a consistent framework for the application of enforcement issues and to provide transparency to Melbourne Water employees and other stakeholders interested or affected by Melbourne Water’s enforcement or compliance activities.

For waterway and land management functions, this policy focuses on compliance and enforcement of the Victorian Water Act relating to:

- Construction, operation, maintenance, alteration and decommissioning of works including, but not limited to, works on waterways, works on drains or other constructed assets, private crossings, stormwater outlets, etc.
- Earth works or deposition of soil or material on designated land that impacts on flooding or hydraulic performance of waterways and drains.

For the Diversions function, this policy focuses on compliance and enforcement of the Victorian Water Act relating to:

- Taking and using water.
- Construction, operation, maintenance, alteration and decommissioning of works including, but not limited to, works on waterways for the take and use of water.

Melbourne Water is also a participant in the Water Compliance Community of Practice, which is also coordinated by DEECA. Melbourne Water participates in the community of practice as a working group member of the Water Compliance Communications Working Group, the Authorised Water Officer Network and the non-Urban Metering Working Group. Melbourne Water currently has two Authorised Water Officers who have the authority to issue infringement notices under various sections of the Act. Since July 2023 we have the ability to issue Penalty Infringement Notices via Fines Victoria for unauthorised take.

As part of the activities in compliance and enforcement renewal across the state, Melbourne Water has upgraded its Metering Action Plan, which aims to upgrade and expand our metering fleet to AS4747 compliant meters. Additional activities also include expanding our telemetry network to increase real time access to usage data.

Rollout of our Metering Action Plan across our entire diversions area has progressed well ahead of schedule, and on our current implementation trajectory we anticipate we will be fully compliant to the implementation program of the Victorian Metering Policy by the required date of 2025. This will involve the upgrade of installation of 261 data loggers remaining by 2025. As of June 2024, 100% of all meters required to be upgraded to AS4747 standards are compliant.

In addition Melbourne Water has created a Compliance and Enforcement Statement. The Statement is now available on our website and outlines our approach to compliance and enforcement and was

developed in line with DEECA's Non-Urban Compliance and Enforcement Guidelines for Water Corporations 2019.

To inform customers and promote our approach to zero tolerance on water theft Melbourne Water have undertaken a number of initiatives including, developing a compliance and enforcement web page, adding Zero Tolerance to water theft banners on invoices, having a compliance focus for the annual StreamNews newsletter, conversations with customers by our officers in the field and the creation of four Fact Sheets.

3. Plan Implementation

3.1 Plan Prescriptions

Each of the Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) contain specific management prescriptions within a Stream Flow Management Plans (SFMPs). In accordance with section 32C of the Victorian Water Act 1989, Melbourne Water is required to report annually on the implementation of the management prescriptions of each SFMP.

All plans have remained compliant with the associated prescriptions with no non-compliances detected. Two plans, Plenty River and Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks continue to carry legacy prescriptions that have not been implemented. These prescriptions require the investigation and implementation of meters on all licences (Plenty) and rosters (Steels, Pauls and Dixons). The number of compliant and non-compliant prescriptions for each WSPAs have been summarised in **Table 3**.

Melbourne Water has previously investigated the feasibility of implementing these prescriptions. For the Plenty catchment it was determined the cost disproportionately outweighed the benefit of installing meters on dams in the Plenty River system. Meters have been fitted to all active commercial or irrigation licensees' equipment greater than 5ML which does not include all registered farm dams. The investigation and outcomes have been reported in previous Annual Reports.

For Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks, the hydraulic nature of the creeks shows rapid rise and fall of stream levels. Due to this characteristic the implementation of rosters was deemed unworkable as a management practice (as reported in previous Annual Reports).

Melbourne Water will continue to report these legacy management prescriptions until a formal plan amendment.

Detailed descriptions of each WSPAs management prescription contained within their associated SFMPs and a copy of the detailed compliance assessment can be requested by contacting Melbourne Water via 131 722 or enquiry@melbournewater.com.au, or visiting the Melbourne Water Website: <https://www.melbournewater.com.au/contact-us>

Table 3: Assessment of Stream Flow Management Plan prescriptions.

Water Supply Protection Area (WSPA)	Number of prescriptions reported within the WSPA	Number of compliant prescriptions	Number of non-compliant prescriptions	Name of non-compliant prescription(s)
Hoddles Creek	13	13	0	0
Little Yarra and Dons Rivers	8	8	0	0
Olinda Creek	13	13	0	0
Plenty River	12	11	1	Installing Meters (14.1 - 14.2)
Steels, Pauls and Dixons Creeks	13	12	1	Rosters (16.1 - 16.2)
Stringybark Creek	8	8	0	0
Woori Yallock Creek	28	28	0	0

3.2 Monitoring

To evaluate the performance of SFMPs in protecting instream aquatic values, Melbourne Water has initiated ecological (fish, eDNA and platypus) monitoring program across seven SFMPs in the Yarra River Basin. This monitoring program is designed to determine the long term condition and trend of aquatic species in each SFMPs. Collection of eDNA is in its fourth year and Melbourne Water is in the process of determining a standard eDNA analysis approach and aiming to compare monitored results to historical data where appropriate. A protocol will also need to be developed that triggers further assessment - for example what would happen if a priority species is detected one year but not the next.

Additional monitoring has also been undertaken through supplementary monitoring programs for Melbourne Waters Healthy Waterways Strategy. This supplementary monitoring captures and records information on fish, macroinvertebrates, platypus, water quality and vegetation condition and extent. This information is collected and is interrogated as part of each plans five year review phase to determine the performance of the plan in protecting instream aquatic values. Ecological monitoring for the water year 2023-24 is available in the SFMP Annual Report 2023-24 Supplementary data file.

4. Future Management Considerations

4.1 SFMP Reviews

No formal reviews were required during the current reporting period. However, there are three SFMPs which are currently undergoing review and the findings will be reported in the 2024/25 Annual Report. These catchments are Little Yarra and Don Rivers, Olinda Creek and Woori Yallock Creek SFMPs.

4.2 Proposed Plenty River SFMP Revocation

Melbourne Water has commenced preparation for the revocation of the Plenty River SFMP and to replace with a Local Management Plan. It is expected that the formal request to the Minister will occur in 2025. Melbourne Water will commence a community and licence holder consultation

process, including relevant traditional owner groups. Melbourne Water will seek approval from the Minister in separate correspondence. A draft LMP to replace the SFMP (subject to the outcome from the revocation process) will be prepared and Melbourne Water will seek feedback in parallel with the SFMP revocation process. This will aid a smooth transition between the two management plans.

4.3 Continual Improvement

Melbourne Water is focused on continual improvement to better serve our customers, the community and the environment. Melbourne Water maintains an active role in the review of licensing issues and proposed legislative amendments through the State-wide Water Licencing Committee and as an active member on the Murray Darling Basin Compliance compact.

Melbourne Water has completed activities to meet ministerial expectations in line with the current compliance and enforcement policies and amendments to the Water Act outlining provisions for Penalty Infringement Notices (PINs). Since 1st July 2023 Melbourne Water can issue PINs for various activities relating to water theft. Melbourne Water has been an active participant in regulatory review and improvements to compliance and enforcement. In June 2020 we participated in an Independent Review of our Compliance and Enforcement policies, systems and processes, undertaken on behalf of DELWP. The review confirmed we have the necessary procedures and practices in place to successfully manage compliance matters with only one recommendation put forward. This was to ensure that the development of the Melbourne Water Compliance & Enforcement Strategy and review of our Compliance and Enforcement Manual be finalised, which was completed in April 2021.

Melbourne Water Authorised Water Officers and other staff undertake continual skills training to ensure that they are adequately equipped to undertake compliance and enforcement activities in a safe and efficient manner in line with DEECAs Compliance and Enforcement Capability, Training and Appointment Framework.

Melbourne Water will be commencing a Traditional Owner engagement program with the Wurundjeri people to inform Traditional Owners on the current SFMPs and work together to identify the role they wish to play in the statutory planning process. This program will seek to work with Traditional Owners to identify cultural values and identify their roles on SFMP consultative committees should a plan need amendment following identification of Traditional Owner Values or

establishment of Traditional Owner water rights. The program will also engage various Divisions of the Water and Catchments Group of DEECA and Melbourne Water's Traditional Owner Relationship Manager.

5. References

1. Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI), 2014. Local Management Plan Guidelines.
2. Melbourne Waters Compliance and Enforcement webpage:
<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/water-data-and-education/waterway-diversions/water-use-compliance>
3. Melbourne Waters Compliance and Enforcement Statement:
<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/media/16801/download>
4. Victorian Government, 2010. Victorian Government Gazette No. G31 Thursday 5 August 2010. Victoria State Government, Melbourne.
5. Water Act 1989