



# RURAL WATER NEWS

## JULY 2008

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### **IMPORTANT MESSAGES FOR IRRIGATORS REGARDING SEASON 08/09**

#### **The New Season**

An opening allocation of 0% was announced by Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) for all Victorian Irrigators north of the divide. Goulburn Murray Water is the appointed Victorian Government's Water Resource Manager for northern Victoria.

Murray system irrigators, along with their counterparts on the Goulburn, Campaspe, Loddon and Broken Rivers will have to wait until rainfall delivers enough inflows to our major storages to provide for an opening allocation this season.

LMW is advised that there is adequate water in storage to run the Murray (albeit at lower levels and flows) and meet essential human needs, at Stage 3 restrictions during the winter early spring period and Stage 4 restrictions, if necessary, during the warmer months. We now need better than average winter and spring inflows to improve the allocation outlook for the irrigation season.

#### **Carryover availability**

As the river can be run, water carried over from last season is now available for use by diverters pumping direct from the river for the whole season. Meeting losses (seepage and evaporation) within the Robinvale, Red Cliffs and Merbein pumped districts for the early part of the season is covered. LMW holds a Bulk Entitlement to cover losses, some of the volume has been made available and as inflows occur the balance will also be covered. LMW customers therefore have access to their carryover. Systems will be run in accordance with our winter schedule with adjustments when necessary due to works demand and climatic needs.

It is important to note that customers in GMW gravity systems have no access to carryover water until their delivery system losses are covered and channel systems can be operated.

#### **Qualification of Rights to access water**

Similar to last season, with allocations at zero the Minister has approved measures to allow customers to access water for domestic and stock use and to limited commercial businesses. Qualification allows customers to legally take water explicitly for in-house domestic use, approved commercial activities (eg packing and processing of fruit) and industrial processes. Approved uses include process cleaning, cooling, wash-down, fire fighting, health and safety, dust suppression, watering of commercial nursery stock and watering of cattle or other stock. If you are a commercial business using raw river water and you have not received a letter authorising access under qualified rights please contact us. Note your

pumping capacity must be adequate to supply your business and/or domestic & stock needs only. Access to water under qualified rights for general irrigation of commercial crops is prohibited.

Qualified Rights will be lifted when allocations reach 20%. All water consumed in the qualification period will be debited against your allocation bank account. Should your usage be above the volume contained in your allocation bank account at the time of rescission you will be required to make up the discrepancy by in-bound trade within 30 days or a penalty may be applied. All normal water charges will apply for all water used.

### **Watering of Gardens and Restrictions**

Private diverters and irrigation district customers must comply with the level of water restrictions that apply in urban areas. Currently, all customers are on a stage 3 water restriction. For further information on the requirements for these restrictions please visit our website [www.lmw.vic.gov.au](http://www.lmw.vic.gov.au)

### **The Outlook for Season 08/09**

The following extract is the Murray resource provider's view of the season ahead for the Murray and Goulburn systems.

*Current inflow conditions and monthly inflow records from seasons with dry autumn and early winter conditions have been used to prepare the outlooks.*

*The following terminology is used in the tables:*

*'Wet' - Inflow volumes that have 1 chance in 10 of being exceeded*

*'Average' - Inflow volumes that have 5 chances in 10 of being exceeded*

#### ***Murray System (% of High-Reliability Water Share at Date Shown)***

<b><i>Inflow Conditions</i></b>	<b><i>15 Aug 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Oct 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Dec 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Feb 2009</i></b>
<i>Wet</i>	0%	79%	100%	100%
<i>Average</i>	0%	25%	56%	69%

#### ***Goulburn System (% of High-Reliability Water Share at Date Shown)***

<b><i>Inflow Conditions</i></b>	<b><i>15 Aug 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Oct 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Dec 2008</i></b>	<b><i>15 Feb 2009</i></b>
<i>Wet</i>	28%	93%	100%	100%
<i>Average</i>	0%	50%	75%	85%

***Under dry conditions - inflow volumes that have 9 chances in 10 of being exceeded - the Murray system has no allocation for the season and the Goulburn system reaches 14% by 15 February 2009.***

***A repeat of 2007/08 inflow conditions is expected to produce a Murray seasonal allocation of 30% of high-reliability water shares and a 40% allocation in the Goulburn system.***

For LMW customers the previous outlook issued in May and shown below was more promising however a lack of autumn rain and a very dry June have diminished our outlook for both the Average and Dry inflow conditions. What remains a positive is that if catchments wet up quickly, the key inflow months of July, August and September and potentially part of November are still to come!

**Murray System (May 15<sup>th</sup> announcement)**

<b>Inflow Conditions</b>	<b>1 Jul 2008</b>	<b>15 Aug 2008</b>	<b>15 Oct 2008</b>	<b>15 Dec 2008</b>	<b>15 Feb 2009</b>
Wet	0%	89%	100%	100%	100%
Average	0%	4%	61%	82%	93%
Dry	0%	0%	11%	17%	24%

What is not positive is that if we don't get above average inflows during the key months, any inflows received will have to be conserved to deliver water for essential human needs to communities across all basin states in the later part of this season and next. The conservative dry inflow scenario delivers a 0% allocation to the Murray for the whole season.

**Key Points**

- The outlook retains a conservative bias.
- Any allocation in early August is not likely unless a major rainfall event occurs in the catchments and delivers inflows beyond that needed to cover operating losses for delivery systems.
- With a repeat of last years inflows, the forecast indicates a total allocation of 30% by February 09
- Water carried over in districts where delivery is not possible may come on to the market.
- Weather events, such as those that occurred in the Newcastle region and in Gippsland last year, can change the outlook greatly if they occur in the Murray catchments.

**Changes for Season 08/09**

Lower Murray Water will soon deliver to customers its "Rural Customer Charter". This charter will spell out LMW obligations to customers and conversely customer's obligations to LMW in regard to service delivery. Some aspects of the charter will come into play in line with directions from Government immediately and clear away some of the uncertainty that existed last season.

***Providing timely usage and other advice to all Customers***

We are currently upgrading our IT systems and improving "WaterNow", our internet based water ordering system for District Customers. This upgrade will provide the ability for data from the Victorian Water Register to be seamlessly provided on the assessment page of WaterNow in a much more precise format. WaterNow will shortly be accessible to Private Diverters who will be able to log on using a pin number and view their allocation bank account balances, see approved and pending trades on a daily basis and usage debited to the last meter read. LMW will provide advice and an instruction booklet on using these facilities prior to them becoming available.

Private Diverters will also be able to access Silo Weather Forecasts, River Management and storage reports, flow and salinity forecasts and other information provided to District Customers through this site.

Our Website provides regularly updated information on a range of matters affecting customers including service interruptions (planned and unplanned) this can be found under the menu item 'Water Ordering' and prior to logging into WaterNow. Many customers who have bookmarked our site at the ordering page miss these notices. When in WaterNow please click on Main to view these messages or bookmark at 'Water Ordering'.

### ***Provision of local climate data to support irrigation planning.***

LMW has funded the installation of automatic weather stations at Nangiloc, Red Cliffs and Robinvale with data accessible on our website at 10 minute intervals. With the support of funding from the Department of Primary Industry, a further 3 stations will be installed at Lindsay Island, Lake Cullulleraine and Piangil. Discussions are underway to joint share a site at Nenandie and down the track install a further site in the Merbein West/Yelta area. Both real-time and archive data will be accessible.

### ***One on one WaterNow training for customers.***

Water trading staff are available on Wednesday afternoons to provide training on how to use WaterNow or to conduct a water trade. Please contact Ivy to make a booking on 50513400

### ***Managing water available between properties.***

Following representations to DSE and the Victorian Water Registrar, it is now possible for customers with multiple properties to apply to link those properties to a single allocation bank account (ABA) and cancel the other ABA's. Effectively, this means that your allocations from many water shares will be deposited/credited into one single ABA and usage across all properties withdrawn/debited from that same ABA. This process avoids the need for trading between properties for use early in the season and to cover use during the season. It also means you can trade into one ABA and use that water on any or all of your properties. If you require further information or assistance please contact Louise Hinks on 50513400 regarding Form 40.

### ***Shared and Syndicate pumping arrangements.***

Many customers who share a river pump and are metered at the pump only are treated as a single entity with all allocation, trade and usage recorded against a parent ABA. This is because the only legally acceptable method of determining usage is through a meter of an approved standard. The major issue for customers in this situation is that the group must have strong internal procedures to manage each member's usage within the account. If group member's wish to operate as individuals, each member's usage must be separately metered and any inter-property connections disconnected. Each member would be issued with their own ABA and Water Use Licence if they don't already hold one but all members would continue to hold the Works Licence. The group should take steps to become a legal entity with rules of association covering any liability associated with the works including their equity in relation to replacement, operation and maintenance costs. If you wish to discuss your arrangements please contact your diversion inspector regarding separate metering and Matt Wilson on 03 50513400 who will assist with licence amendments and applications.

### ***How Lower Murray Water will manage overuse during the season.***

*Customers* must maintain a positive balance in their *water allocation bank account* at all times. On a monthly basis *Customers* in overuse will be advised in writing of the amount that they are in overuse and will be required to purchase water to cover such overuse within 30 days from the date of the letter. Failure to do so will result in a penalty being applied at the applicable rate. Non payment and continued overuse may result in suspension of supply and further action being taken if necessary. This will apply to all customers but provides customers a period of time in which trades can be arranged and completed without access to water being denied.

### ***How Lower Murray Water will manage overuse at the end of the season.***

In late July customers will receive a statement from the Victorian Water Register providing data from last season. The statement will show carryover brought forward at the beginning of the season, all allocations credited to the account, all trade in and out and usage for the season and carryover calculations for this season's carryover. If you are in overuse you will be required to take immediate action to remedy this. You will not be legally allowed to pump water and you will be levied a \$2,000/ML fine.

### **Robinvale Project update**

The Robinvale High Pressure Project is progressing well with the dual rising main largely complete. The pipe laying contractor has commenced the installation of the 1400mm main pipeline which will service all sections. Sub-mains servicing smaller areas will be completed by a number of specialist pipe laying teams (up to 6 teams) commencing in August 2008. Whilst these teams are expected to complete the installation of sub-mains in each section during the irrigation season, the speed at which the pipes will be laid should minimise disruptions to growers.

The pipe laying contract is expected to be completed by May 2009. The contract for the construction of the main pump station delivering high pressure water is not expected to be awarded until November 2008 with an 8 month construction period, ready for the 2009/10 irrigation season.

### **Sunraysia Modernisation Project.**

Most customers would be aware that Premier Brumby secured funding of \$103 million in federal funding for infrastructure upgrades for the Sunraysia region at the recent COAG meeting in Sydney.

LMW welcomes the funding and will advise which projects and the amount of funding allocated as soon as we are formally advised.

### **Essential Services Commission – Final Decision on Water Prices**

As previously reported Lower Murray Water submitted its Water Plan to the ESC outlining price increases to customers sought for the next five years. The ESC has now released their final determination. The average real price increase for LMW Rural Customers will be 0.9% per annum plus the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as set by the ESC for each year within the determination period.

The ESC has published a comparison of the average annual real price increase for all Victorian Water Businesses on the Web at the following address.

<http://www.esc.vic.gov.au/public/Water/Regulation+and+Compliance/Decisions+and+Determinations/Water+price+review+2008-13/Water+price+review+2008-13.htm>

LMW Rural customers as part of their forward planning can therefore budget on an average price increase each year for the period 2008 through to 2013 of 0.9% plus CPI (currently 4.2%) i.e. a total increase of 5.1%.

### **Water Ordering changes in Districts**

Placing orders by telephone directly with Operations Staff during business hours is to be phased out over the next 12 months. Operations staff will be spending more time managing our distribution systems. With 75% of all water orders now placed over the internet customers are encouraged to use either the internet or phone keypad option to place orders. LMW will provide advice and an instruction booklet on using these facilities prior to the phase out commencing.

### **Metering Program**

Installation of meters on district and private diversion stock and domestic connections, where the supply is not through an irrigation outlet is programmed to be completed this financial year. The replacement of private diversions meters with Mag meters will also be completed this financial year. Replacement of pumped district meters with Mag meters is programmed over the next 5 years unless additional funding becomes available.

### **Your Water Shares – are they confirmed?**

The Victorian Water Registrar advises that a significant number of our customers have not taken steps to confirm ownership of their Water Share. Please check correspondence from the Water Registrar sent to you last year on two occasions advising the status of your Shares. If you have a status of CL17 (1) a & b or CL18 (2) on your correspondence please undertake the recommended actions contained in those letters as soon as possible.

### **Rubbish on LMW Reserves**

LMW maintenance crews need to be able to access channels, pipes and other works along our water supply reserves. Please keep all rubbish off our reserves so that we can access sites for maintenance and repairs to our assets. If you have any concerns regarding reserves in your area please call, Peter Ebner Manager – Rural Customer Service on 50513400.