

# Water Compliance Update



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**LMW Growers Conference 2020**



Environment,  
Land, Water  
and Planning

# Strong record of compliance

## **Victoria is a leader in compliance and water management and we will maintain our efforts to support strong markets**

- Strong compliance protects your entitlement and confidence in the market – through Victorian policy of zero tolerance
- Victorian government focus is Basin and State wide
- As water prices stay high, must make sure everything is done right and prioritise compliance

## **Developments in the compliance framework in 2019/20:**

- Guidelines on Compliance and Enforcement for Water Corporations published in November 2019, new Victorian non-urban metering policy in March 2020 – *even more detection and follow-up*
- New Water (Infringements) Regulations 2020 introduced on 1 July 2020 – *finer can be issued for unauthorised take*
- Des Pearson AO - Independent compliance review completed in June 2020 – *sustained focus now through to June 2021 and beyond*

*“Victoria is seen as a leader in compliance and water management – particularly in the context of revelations in the Murray-Darling Basin over recent years – and I want us to continue to lead the way.”*

**Minister for Water**

## **Victorian has a zero tolerance policy**

- Water theft is unacceptable and negatively impacts others
- Zero tolerance maintains confidence in water resource management and the integrity of the water market
- Ensures that there is a level playing field for all water users
- Negative account balances are prohibited under the Water Act and will be detected and investigated

## **Findings from Compliance Review – Des Pearson AO**

- Current levels of unauthorised take not excessive in Victoria, but higher than desirable
- There is scope for more proactive mitigation measures and more timely and rigorous enforcement actions
- Implementation will happen as more meters are rolled out

*“We have a zero tolerance approach to unauthorised water take – it’s unacceptable and could negatively impact other irrigators who are doing the right thing.”*

**Minister for Water**

## What does this mean for irrigators?

- Irrigators must maintain account balances
- Water corporations know when account balances near zero through reporting, better metering and telemetry
- Water corporations use this information to investigate all potential breaches and take swift enforcement actions where necessary
- Type of enforcement action taken will be risk-based, can include fines and court action

**ZERO**  **tolerance on water theft**

Keep your account balance positive to avoid penalties.

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**VICTORIA**  
State  
Government

## **DELWP is implementing the independent review of compliance and enforcement with water corporations**

- *Risks (and related harms) in the effective delivery of the compliance function have become heightened because of ongoing drought conditions and high water market prices in Northern Victoria – Des Pearson, June 2020*
- Over 40 recommendations including focus on:
  - Communications
  - Training
  - Work on consistency across the State
  - Stronger planning and reporting
  - Increased metering and strengthening enforcement.

## **DELWP is working closely with LMW and other water corporations with rural customers**

- Increased reporting from water corporations to DELWP and to the Minister on trends, risk and performance
- Monthly community of practice meetings to improve consistency
- Consistent communications to rural customers
- Des Pearson to return in June 2021