

Media Release

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DAIRY SHED WATER AMNESTY

Victorian dairy farmers can make sure water they use in the dairy shed is fully licensed under an amnesty period announced this week.

Department of Sustainability and Environment Manager Resource Policy and Licensing, Patrick O'Halloran, said the amnesty was running until 26 February 2010.

"The Dairy Shed Water Licence Transition Program is to ensure the volume of water used in every dairy shed – including water for washing yards, milking equipment, platforms and other plant – is licensed," Mr O'Halloran said.

"Research shows that a medium-sized dairy farm can use 10 million litres of water or more in the dairy shed each year, yet many dairy farmers either have a licence for 2 to 4 million litres or do not hold a licence for this use.

"Dairy farming is a big part of Victoria's economy. That's why we've worked with industry to develop the program allowing dairy farmers a chance to get their dairy shed water use accurately licensed.

"With more than 5000 dairy farmers in the State, we need to make sure this commercial use of water is licensed and accounted for.

"All commercial water use must be accounted for sustainable resource management."

All dairy farmers are eligible to apply except those using surface water from declared (regulated) water systems.

Declared water systems include gravity fed systems in northern Victoria, and the Thomson/Macalister and Werribee systems in southern Victoria. In these areas there was a process to license dairy shed water use when water licences were converted into water shares.

"We hope farmers see the amnesty as a chance to make sure they're operating by the book," Mr O'Halloran said.

"Penalties will apply to farmers who do not apply under the program but continue using water in the dairy shed without an accurate licence."

The licence transition program was developed with input from the Victorian Farmers Federation, the Australian Dairy Products Federation and water corporations.

In October, information about the program including licence application forms, is being posted to all farmers registered with Dairy Food Safety Victoria.

More information is also available from www.ourwater.vic.gov.au or contact your local water corporation.