

FAQs – Lake Eppalock

December 2014



Why was Lake Eppalock built?

Lake Eppalock was constructed between 1960 and 1964 to supply irrigation and stock and domestic water to the Campaspe irrigation district, diverters from the Campaspe River and urban supplies to Bendigo and Heathcote. More recently it has provided urban supplies to Ballarat. In years of plentiful water resources, water from Lake Eppalock is used to supplement the Waranga Western Channel that supplies irrigation customers in the Rochester and Loddon Valley irrigation areas.

Who “owns” the water in Lake Eppalock?

Water entitlement holders (owners) include irrigators, environmental water holders and urban water corporations. For more information about how the water in Lake Eppalock is distributed to these owners, please visit <http://www.nvrn.net.au/resources.aspx>.

What do each of those groups use the water for?

- GMW irrigators: Agriculture, stock and domestic water supply.
- Urban water corporations: Coliban Water - urban water supply to the City of Bendigo and other towns and supplement to Coliban Water irrigators; Central Highland Water - City of Ballarat and other towns.
- Victorian Environmental Water Holder/Commonwealth Environmental Water Office/The Living Murray: Meeting environmental objectives (eg improved bank vegetation, habitat for fish) in the Campaspe River.

What’s GMW’s role at Lake Eppalock?

GMW operates and maintains the structures at Lake Eppalock and manages the water held in the lake.

The drop in the lake level is really noticeable this year - is there more water being delivered this year than previous years?

The total volume of water released from Lake Eppalock this year is similar to previous years. There has been a noticeable drop in the lake’s water levels this year because inflows (the amount of water coming in to the lake ie from run-off) have been very low. To December 2014 the total inflow to Lake Eppalock since July has been 19,000 ML. This is about 15% of the long term average and is about the volume lost to evaporation last year. The inflows over spring were only 2,000 ML and only 3% of the long term average. In winter and spring last year, inflows were 80,700 ML.

If it stays dry what sort of levels do you think it will drop to by Australia Day?

If it stays dry, the level will fall to about 54% of capacity by Australia Day.

At that level can you still use the lake for recreational purposes?

The lake is available for use at all levels. However, at levels below 16% of capacity, boat speed is restricted to 5 knots and launching from boat ramps is limited.



What's this "superpipe" people are talking about? Can it be used to fill up Lake Eppalock?

During the drought, a pipeline from the Waranga Western Channel to Bendigo and Ballarat was built to supplement water supplies to these regional cities. The pipeline is called the Goldfields Superpipe. While the superpipe can transfer water from the Goulburn River system to Lake Eppalock as part of the Bendigo and Ballarat supply, it cannot be used to fill up the lake. It is not owned or operated by GMW and has a very small capacity compared to the size of Lake Eppalock.

How is water released from Lake Eppalock?

Water is released into the Campaspe River via a valve at the base of the dam wall. This valve has a maximum capacity of about 1,600 ML/d. There are no spillway gates at Lake Eppalock.

Lake Eppalock is a popular tourist destination and generates business for local communities. Does GMW support that activity?

Yes. The Lake Eppalock Land and On-Water Management Plan, developed with input from a range of lake users, supports recreational and tourism ventures that will not adversely impact on lake operations, water quality, environmental values or public safety and access. For a copy of the plan visit www.gmwater.com.au/lakeeppalock

I have heard that the lake wouldn't fall below 70% again, is that true?

No. There is no guarantee about water levels. The level is determined by the volume flowing into the lake from the upstream catchment and how much water is needed by owners of the water. When inflows to the lake are sufficient to offset the volume released, then the level of the lake will stay the same. When inflows are low, like they have been this season, the release of water will result in the storage level falling. GMW cannot control how much water flows into the lake from the upstream catchment.

Where can I find more information about Lake Eppalock?

- Information on the history, the Lake Eppalock Land and On-Water Management Plan and storage levels: <http://www.g-mwater.com.au/water-resources/storages/lakeeppalock>
- Information about rights to water (<http://waterregister.vic.gov.au/water-entitlements/bulk-entitlements>) and water trading (<http://waterregister.vic.gov.au/water-trading>) is available on the Water Register website.

I still have some questions – who can I contact?

Please call River Operations on 1800 013 357.