

## Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area

The Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area (the GMA) covers the Ovens River catchment downstream of Myrtleford. This includes the Buffalo and King Rivers, and extends north along the floodplain to the River Murray.

Groundwater resources in the GMA are managed under a local management plan (the Plan) approved by Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) in 2012.

### Annual allocations

Groundwater levels in the GMA are managed by the potential to restrict water extraction through the application of restrictions on licensed take (or 'annual allocations').

Restrictions were not applied in 2020/21 as the three-year rolling averages (of groundwater recovery levels) were above the trigger levels – refer Figures 1 and 2.

The volume available for take in 2021/22 is 100 per cent of groundwater licensed entitlement volume (licence volume) for all management zones (i.e., no restrictions).

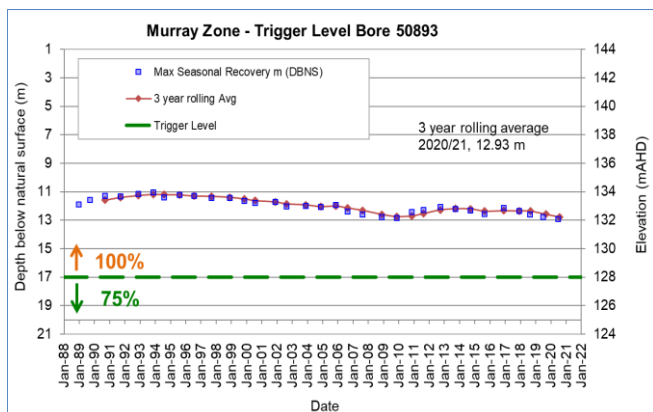


Figure 1. Trigger graph for Murray Zone restrictions

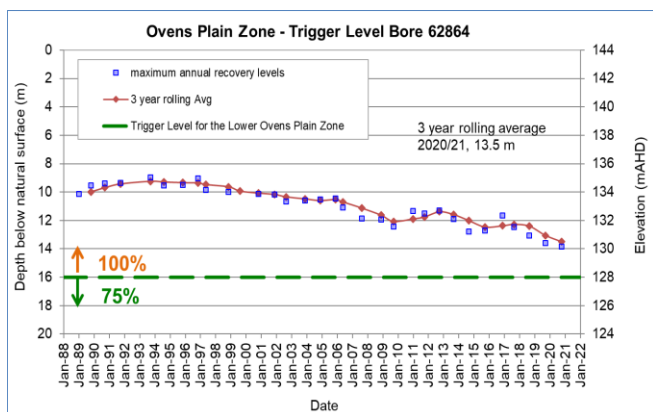


Figure 2. Trigger graph for Ovens Plain Zone restrictions

### Groundwater licence volume and use

Recorded use in the 2020/21 water year was eight per cent lower than in 2019/20. The total recorded use in the GMA was 5,694.7 ML, or 29 per cent of licence volume (Table 1, Figure 3).

Table 1. Licence volume and use for 2020/21

Management zone	Licence volume (ML/yr)	Recorded use (ML)
Ovens Plain Zone	4,012.6	2,653.0
Mid Ovens Zone	10,811.6	1,863.3
Bedrock Zone	1,420.6	204.1
Murray Zone	3,632.0	974.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,877.0</b>	<b>5,694.7</b>

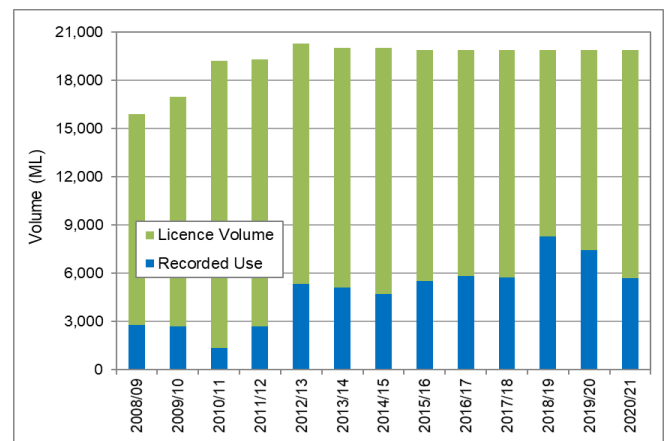


Figure 3. Annual recorded use as a proportion of licence volume

### Licence transfers

Licence volume can be transferred between licences in the GMA, on a temporary or permanent basis.

In 2020/21, the volume of temporary transfers in the GMA totalled 792 ML/yr (Table 2), which was less than half of the 2019/20 total. The total volume of permanent transfers was 17 ML/yr (Table 3) which was a significant reduction from 2019/20 (912 ML/yr).

Table 2. Temporary transfers in 2020/21

Management zone	Licence volume transferred from (ML/yr)	Licence volume transferred to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain Zone	200	792
Mid Ovens Zone	592	-
Bedrock Zone	-	-
Murray Zone	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>792.0</b>	<b>792.0</b>

**Table 3. Permanent transfers in 2020/21**

Management zone	Licence volume transferred from (ML/yr)	Licence volume transferred to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain Zone	-	5.0
Mid Ovens Zone	17.0	12.0
Bedrock Zone	-	-
Murray Zone	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>17.0</b>

### Licence compliance

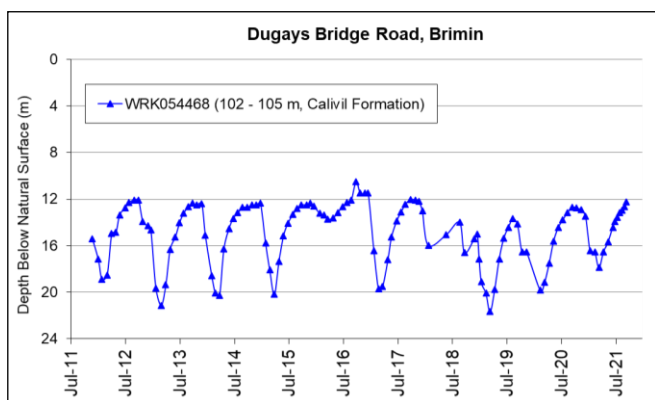
In 2020/21 there was one reported instance of alleged unauthorised take of groundwater (incl. overuse) in the GMA.

GMW has a zero-tolerance approach to unauthorised take of non-urban water. Relevant actions, if required, are taken in accordance with GMW’s Risk-Based Compliance and Enforcement Framework. More information is available on the GMW website, at [www.gmwater.com.au/compliance](http://www.gmwater.com.au/compliance)

### Groundwater levels

GMW monitor groundwater levels in 62 State observation bores within the GMA.

In the Murray Zone, 2020/21 saw groundwater levels fall to 17.89 m below the surface, which was 1.94 m higher (i.e., closer to the surface) than the previous year. As of June 2021, groundwater levels had recovered to 14.41 m below the surface in a Calivil Formation bore located at Brimin (Figure 4).

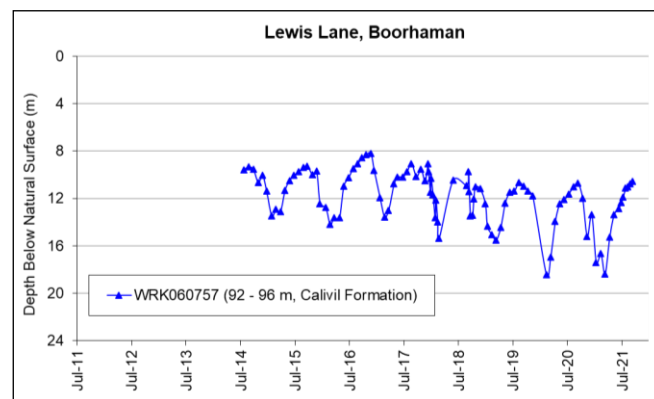


**Figure 4. Groundwater level monitoring at Brimin**

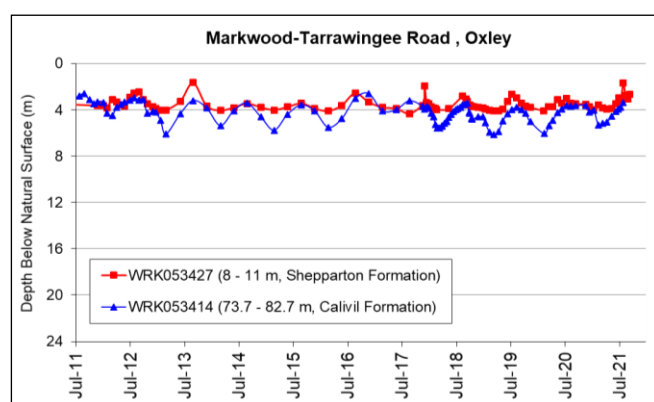
In the Ovens Plain Zone, groundwater levels in the Calivil Formation at Boorhaman dropped to 18.38 m below the surface in March 2021; and had recovered to 12.86 m by mid-June (Figure 5).

In the Mid Ovens Zone, groundwater levels declined to 5.30 m below the surface in the Calivil Formation aquifer at Oxley during 2020/21; and the magnitude of drawdown within the year was 1.68 m (Figure 6).

Groundwater levels in the Shepparton Formation bore at the same monitoring site (WRK053427) remained higher than the deeper bore throughout the year; and there was little variation in the levels (Figure 6).



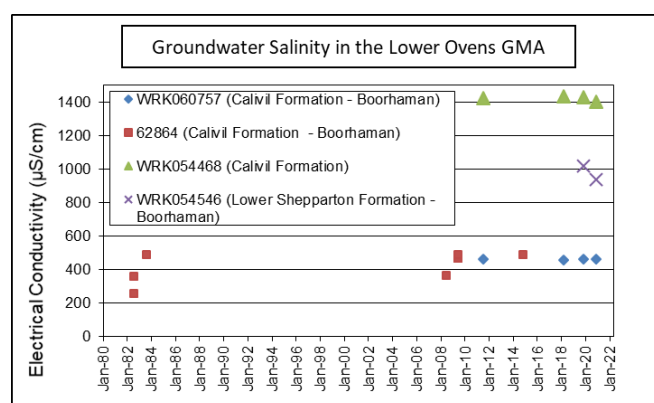
**Figure 5. Groundwater level monitoring at Boorhaman**



**Figure 6. Groundwater level monitoring at Oxley**

### Groundwater quality

Groundwater salinity recorded for key State observation bores in the GMA have not shown any trends from previous values measured (Figure 7).



**Figure 7. Groundwater salinity monitoring**

### Where can I get more information?

The Lower Ovens GMA Local Management Plan is available on the GMW website [www.gmwater.com.au](http://www.gmwater.com.au), or phone GMW on 1800 013 357.