

# Start of Season Newsletter

2017-18

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August 2017



# From the Chair and Managing Director

The early season rain is welcomed and with a strong carryover from last season, our customers can look forward to a good start to the upcoming season.

In the past three months we've had a highly productive Winter Works program, in terms of both maintenance and modernisation. Work crews have been busy clearing silt and weed growth, rebuilding and replacing aging infrastructure and ensuring our storages, channels and delivery systems are operating effectively. This year, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) spent about \$9 million on maintenance.

The Connections Project commenced a Winter Works program of \$100 million as part of the overall \$2 billion investment to modernise the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID) by 2020. This year, it has meant many more new gates, meters and kilometres of pipeline to deliver water to farm gates with record rates of flow and efficiency.

Our customers would be aware of much of this activity from the number of cranes, road closures and earth-moving equipment at work across the region. We thank residents and motorists for their understanding in recent months to keep our crews safe at the many work sites.

A major milestone in June was the release of our draft Strategic Plan – setting our long term goals and guiding our operations in the

years ahead. Thank you to all our customers, stakeholders and staff who contributed in excess of 2500 'ideas' for consideration in developing this strategic vision and any further input to the draft can be made as advised on our website.

We acknowledge the considerable effort and generous time donation from the many participants in the process – thank you. The GMW Board will adopt the finalised Strategic Plan at its September meeting.

We wish our irrigation customers the very best for the 2017-18 season. Be safe and good luck.

**Jo Anderson, Chair**  
**Pat Lennon, Managing Director**

# Seasonal outlook message

Flows into all the major storages in 2016-17 were above average. Although some areas experienced flooding, the wet conditions meant storage volumes recovered from their lowest levels since the end of the millennium drought.

This enabled seasonal determinations to increase over the last summer to 100 per cent of high-reliability water shares (HRWS) and 100 per cent of low-reliability water shares (LRWS) in the Broken, Campaspe and Bullarook systems. The Murray system received 100 per cent of HRWS and five per cent of LRWS, while the Goulburn received 100 per cent of HRWS.

Good reserves were also established for seasonal determinations going into 2017-18. Conditions were dry in the months since the autumn break, with June rainfall the lowest on record across most of the GMW region.

However, rain in July helped to wet the catchments and we are starting to see more run-off from rain.

Total irrigation delivery in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) was 927,702 ML in 2016-17.

Delivery efficiency varied between 83 per cent and 92 per cent. Efficiency in Torrumbarry was influenced by a flood period in the Loddon and Murray systems.

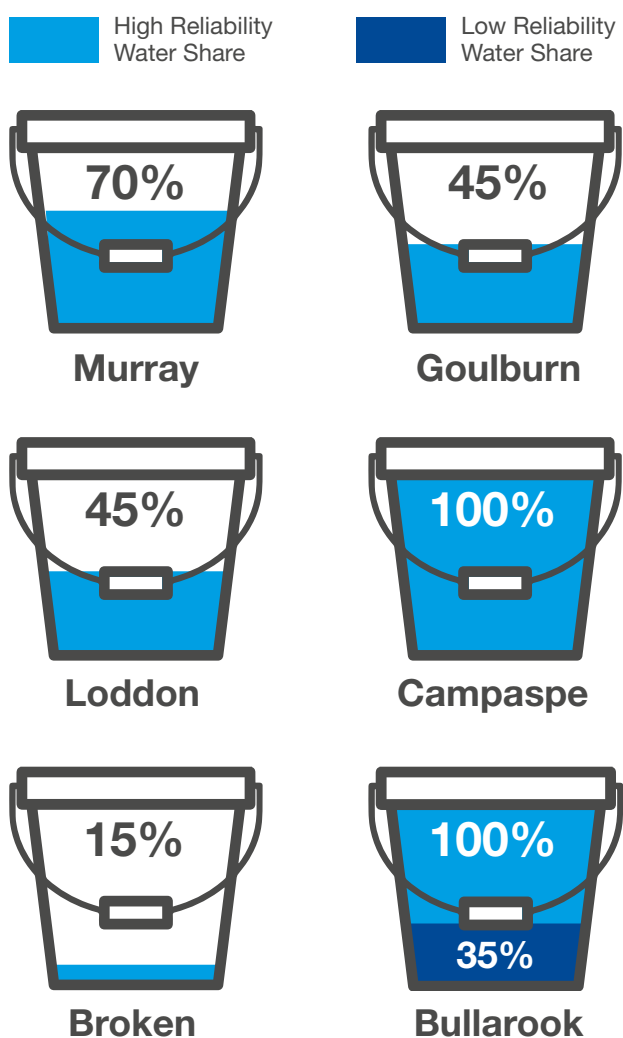
The delivery was spread across the following GMID irrigation areas:

Irrigation area	Irrigation Delivery (ML)	Efficiency
Shepparton	85,632	89%
Central Goulburn	213,076	83%
Rochester	107,140	87%
Loddon Valley	112,189	85%
Murray Valley	168,059	85%
Torrumbarry (including Tresco)	225,420	92%

GMW does not guarantee domestic and stock supply during the winter maintenance period.

Seasonal determinations for 2017-18 were updated on 15 August as per the illustration below. The next seasonal determination update is on 1 September and this will include an updated outlook.

## Seasonal determination for High and Low Reliability Water Shares



The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) seasonal rainfall outlooks indicate drier conditions are likely for northern Victoria over the August to October period.

For the full summary from the bureau, visit [www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead](http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/ahead)

# Groundwater update

Groundwater is water found beneath the earth's surface in the crevices of rocks and in the spaces between grains of sand and gravel. Groundwater can be pumped from aquifers to the surface for use.

In northern Victoria groundwater supports a significant amount of agricultural activity, commercial operations, provides urban supplies and is used for domestic and stock supply. It's also an environmental asset as it feeds springs and waterways and water for plants.

GMW is the licensing authority for groundwater resources in northern Victoria. Total licensed groundwater use in 2016-17 was 79,435 ML – excluding the Shepparton Irrigation Region Groundwater Management Area (SIRGMA).

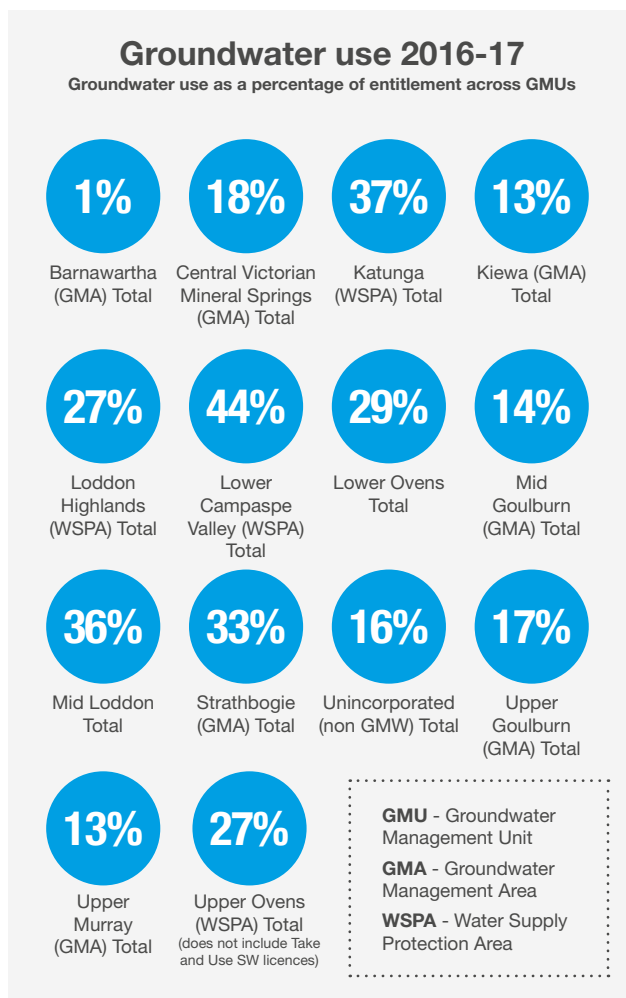
Management plans are in place for most Groundwater Management Units (GMUs) across northern Victoria. These plans include rules about trading, carryover and in some GMUs, allocations. These GMUs are subject to seasonal allocations the same way surface water is determined for irrigation areas.

Groundwater allocations for 2017-18 have been announced, except for the Loddon Highlands Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPAs) and the Mid-Loddon Groundwater Management Areas (GMAs), which will be announced in September.

The determinations are:

Groundwater Management Unit	2017/18 Season Allocations	Date Announced
Katunga WSPA	70%	14 July 2017
Lower Campaspe Valley WSPA	100%	17 July 2017
Loddon Highlands WSPA	Announced September 2017	
Mid-Loddon GMA	Announced September 2017	
Lower Ovens GMA	100%	1 July 2017

All other GMUs and unincorporated areas have 100 per cent each season.



Other important updates for groundwater customers include:

- The Katunga Consultative Committee recently submitted the draft proposed amended Katunga WSPA Groundwater Management Plan to the Minister for Water for consideration. Proposed changes to the plan include a revised allocation method. If the Minister approves the amendments in the 2017-19 season, a revised allocation may be announced.
- The West Goulburn GMA Local Management Plan has been finalised and released to the public. The plan provides easy to understand information on how groundwater can be used in the area, enabling customers to make the most of their entitlement, while also operating within the rules to protect this resource.
- Annual reports for the Groundwater Management Plans will be available on the GMW website from 1 October 2017, at [gmwater.com.au/groundwater](http://gmwater.com.au/groundwater)

# Unregulated Surface Water

An unregulated catchment is one that does not contain a storage managed by a Water Authority to provide releases, in order to meet the water needs of downstream customers.

Effectively, it is the natural stream flows within the catchment. Unregulated systems are managed through rosters and restrictions in line with the Local Management Rules.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) outlook indicated below average rainfall for the winter months for most of Victoria which could impact stream flows during 2017.

The unregulated take and use licence usage for the 2016-17 season:

<b>Broken</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Campaspe</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Goulburn</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Kiewa</b>	<b>26%</b>
<b>Loddon</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Murray</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Ovens</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>28%</b>

# Unregulated customers: Information on Rosters and Restrictions

To manage our unregulated water supplies during times of low rainfall, we monitor flows and implement rosters and restrictions when the flow decreases below minimum volumes.

There are five stages of restriction. These range from Stage 1 (which allows customers to use 10 per cent of their entitlement over a 10-day period) to Stage 5 (only domestic and stock extraction permitted).

Restriction Type	Access
<b>No Restriction</b>	Unrestricted (other than Winter Fill Conditions)
<b>Stage 1 Roster</b>	10% of entitlement every 10 days
<b>Stage 2 Roster</b>	7.5% of entitlement every 10 days
<b>Stage 3 Roster</b>	5% of entitlement every 10 days
<b>Stage 4 Roster</b>	2.5% of entitlement every 10 days
<b>Stage 5 Suspension</b>	Irrigation & Commercial Extraction Prohibited (Domestic & Stock allowed)

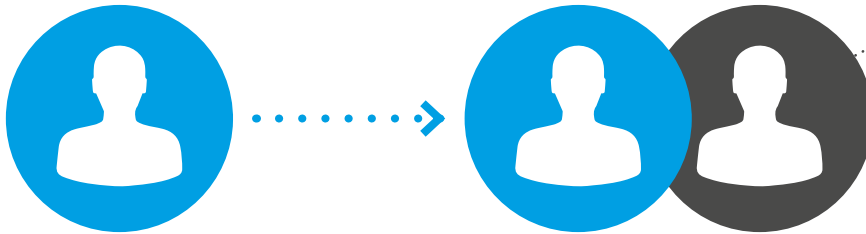
Where a customer operates an on-stream storage, extraction from the storage for irrigation is not affected. However, taking water from a river or stream to refill the storage will be subject to any current restriction in place at the time.

Customers are required by their licence to take water in accordance with any rosters and restrictions on their stream. It is an offence to take and use water at a level exceeding any roster or restriction.

For more information, we have a dedicated Rosters and Restrictions webpage [gmwater.com.au/rosters-and-restrictions](http://gmwater.com.au/rosters-and-restrictions) which allows unregulated customers to review the status of their stream at any time.

# New WaterLINE features

## Add a second mobile phone number to your account



Go from one user...

...to two users



WaterLINE customers can now add a second mobile number to their account to receive important text messages. This new feature will enhance the efficiency of water management for you and your business.

To add a second mobile number: Log in to your WaterLINE account -> **click on the 'User Options' page** -> **add the second mobile phone number into the 'Communications Register'** -> **click 'Accept'**.

If you want to opt in or out of specific text messages: -> **Click on the 'User Options' page** -> **choose the information you require in the 'Communications' section** -> **click 'Accept'**.

## Compare your water usage from season-to-season



WaterLINE customers can now view Water Use Statements from previous years through the website. You will now be able to make year-on-year comparisons of your water usage, which will assist with your business.

To view your Water Use Reports: Log in to your WaterLINE account -> **click on 'Usage'** -> **select a season from the dropdown menu** -> **click 'View Usage Reports'**.



Visit the WaterLINE website at <https://waterline.g-mwater.com.au/waterline/>



# MyGMW – Managing your account is easier than ever

You can now access and manage your GMW account at your convenience, any time and anywhere, through our secure online portal, *MyGMW*.

The *MyGMW* online portal has been designed to make managing your account easier than ever.

You can now do a number of things online rather than having to come into our offices or phone our call centre.

*MyGMW* offers our customers the ability to:

- Submit a change of address or change of contact details request
- Submit a request for a special meter read
- Pay your account online with a credit card
- View the balance owing on your account
- Submit feedback

In addition, registered customers can also:

- Access a variety of property information including land parcels and properties
- See details of applications, requests and accounts
- Review payment transaction details

You can access *MyGMW* from our website at *gmwater.com.au*. It's also smart phone compatible which means you can also use *MyGMW* on your phone.

We will continue to work with our Water Services Committees and use customer feedback to develop additional services to *MyGMW* over time, and we will keep you informed as new features become available.

If you would like some help using *MyGMW* phone GMW on 1800 013 357 or visit your local Customer Service Centre.



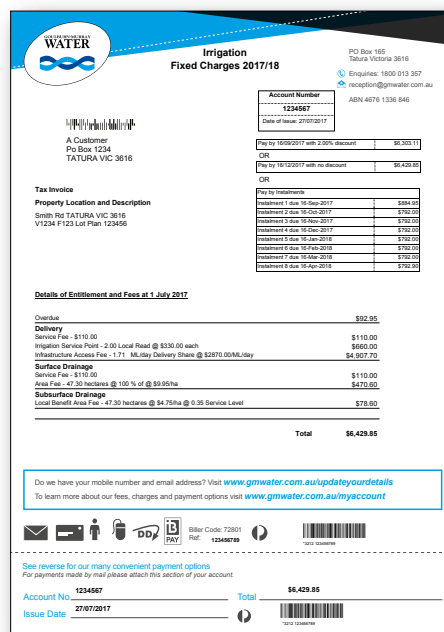
# Fixed charges accounts in the mail

Fixed charges accounts have been mailed and customers should have received them.

These will include things like Infrastructure Access Fees, Water Entitlement Storage Fees and Service Point Fees. An information sheet has been included with the accounts to help describe what our fees mean and what has changed from last year.

Some important items to note with these accounts are:

- Our discount for early payment has returned to two per cent, consistent with earlier years.
- There is a Victorian Government concession of 50 per cent (to a maximum of \$156.55) available on fixed charges accounts for eligible concession card holders upon application. To be eligible, the customer must hold a Pensioner Concession Card (Centrelink or Veterans' Affairs), a Health Care Card (Centrelink) or a Gold Card (Veterans' Affairs). Customers can only claim a concession on their principal place of residence.
- Customers can elect to pay their fixed charges account by instalments. Instalments are spread over eight consecutive months, and payments are due on the 16th of each month. Instalments for 2017-18 fixed accounts start on 16 September 2017 with the final payment due 16 April 2018. (Please note any overdue amounts are payable immediately and included in the first instalment).



- For Diversions customers, we are changing the way we describe the Service Point Fee, to better reflect exactly what it covers. What we previously called “small” we will now refer to as “unmetered”. This refers to service points that do not have a meter installed, or are used only for domestic and stock purposes.
- What we previously called “large” we will now refer to as “metered”. This refers to service points that have a meter installed and are used for purposes other than domestic and stock supply.
- For Diversions customers also, we are changing from an Access Fee-based on licence entitlement, to an Access Fee-based on Service Points. During this transition period the entitlement based Access Fee will decrease as the Service Point based Access Fee increases. Ultimately, only one Access Fee will appear and be entirely based on service points.

You can check your account online with MyGMW at [gmwater.com.au](http://gmwater.com.au) or phone us on 1800 013 357.



# Draft Strategic Plan

This year, we began working on drafting our new Strategic Plan.

During this process, we consulted broadly with customers, stakeholders and our staff. These discussions generated over 2,500 ideas.

From these ideas, we've developed our Draft Strategic Plan, which is now available to download.

We want to know your thoughts about our draft plan – you can submit your feedback by using the form on the website, [gmwater.com.au/ourfuture/our-draft-strategic-plan](http://gmwater.com.au/ourfuture/our-draft-strategic-plan) or by emailing us at [ourfuture@gmwater.com.au](mailto:ourfuture@gmwater.com.au)

We're looking forward to hearing what you think.



## Keep up-to-date with eNews

Want to know what's happening around Goulburn-Murray Water? Keep up-to-date by subscribing to our monthly eNews!

Packed with important information about seasonal determinations, account information, major projects, events and helpful hints, our eNews is an easy way to stay informed about what matters to our customers.

You can join our mailing list at [gmwater.com.au/subscribe](http://gmwater.com.au/subscribe)

**eNews** July 2017

### Groundwater allocations announced

The Katunga and Lower Campaspe Valley Water Supply Protection Areas (WSPA) have both received their full allocation of groundwater for 2017/18.

### Boort Winter Works improve efficiency

A two-pronged GMW winter works project in Boort will see total bank remodelling and rock armouring along 2.8km of the Pyramid-Boort Number 1 Channel and replacement of a 90-year-old syphon which intersects with Calivill Creek.

# Fees and charges at work 2017-18

**Capital spend**  
**\$29.6 million**

**Maintenance spend**  
**\$26.6 million**

**Operations spend**  
**\$46.2 million**

## Bulk Water

**\$6.6**  
 MILLION

Including outlet works upgrade and tower bulkheads protective coating, spillway gates and hoists upgrades.

**\$3.4**  
 MILLION

Including electrical works, beaching rock works, spillway, embankment, intake, weir, plant and equipment maintenance.

**\$18.6**  
 MILLION

Including weed control, water quality monitoring, fencing, planning applications, five year dam safety inspection, rubbish removal and MDBA contribution.

## Drainage

**\$2.2**  
 MILLION

Including structures (bridges, culverts) program and electrical mechanical works.

**\$2.2**  
 MILLION

Including drainage inlets and pump station maintenance, weed and vermin control, fencing and access maintenance.

**\$1**  
 MILLION

Drainage and public groundwater pumps operations, water quality monitoring and sampling and planning applications.

## Water Delivery

**\$20.2**  
 MILLION

Including linear program (channel bank remodelling, fences, rock armouring), meters, structures and electrical mechanical works.

**\$20.2**  
 MILLION

Automated channel maintenance of level sensors, pedestal radio equipment, batteries, pipes, meters and other assets. Various civil maintenance activities including: fencing, irrigation bank works, channel leaks, desilting, structure leaks, tree removal, and access tracks, weed and vermin control.

**\$23.3**  
 MILLION

General field operations, meter reading, water management system maintenance and support, system monitoring and planning, customer services, water quality monitoring and resource management.

## Diversions

**\$0.6**  
 MILLION

Including meter installation.

**\$0.8**  
 MILLION

Including repair of meters and associated infrastructure, remedial maintenance on GMW owned weirs and structures and improving access to diversions assets.

**\$3.3**  
 MILLION

Including order planning and operation of associated infrastructure (weirs, pipelines etc), streamflow monitoring and implementation of restrictions, bore monitoring, interference investigations, compliance and resource management.

# Connections Project 2017 Winter Works

The Connections Project's 2017 Winter Works program has just wrapped up. With a large majority of modernisation works completed during the winter shut down period, the Connections Project has modernised an extensive part of the irrigation network and delivered a number of benefits.

John Holland Group was appointed to construct the Project's Winter Works this year and mobilised to sites in May.

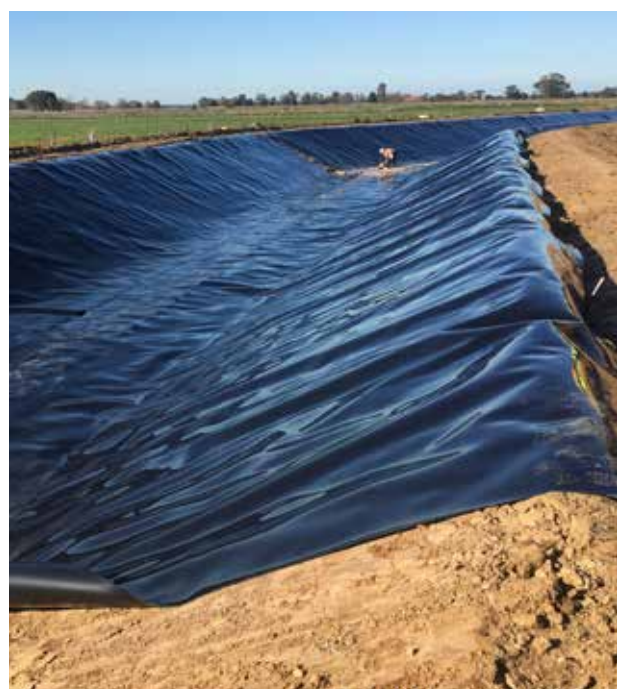
With works this year totalling a significant \$100 million, crews were working on up to 100 active sites daily, with many local firms and contractors benefitting from the extensive program.

This year's works program is double the size of the previous year and completed in the same timeframe, with assistance from good weather conditions to achieve its targets.

With the irrigation season now under way, John Holland and the Connections Project team continue to consult with landowners to progress the remaining works.

John Holland will deliver about 60 per cent of the works, with the Connections Project internal delivery team carrying out the remaining works.

The landowner information portal on the project website shows a channel-by-channel breakdown of solutions, and has recently been updated to show who will deliver the works. Go to [www.connectionsproject.com.au/check-channel-status](http://www.connectionsproject.com.au/check-channel-status)



# Updated brochures to help you

We have recently updated two of our brochures, our *Customer Information Booklet* and our *Understanding your Irrigation Area Water Entitlements* booklet to provide you with the most up-to-date information, to help you make the right decisions for your farm business.

Our Customer Information Booklet provides customers with our contact details, how to

stay informed on our operations and what you need to know in relation to managing your water supply, maintenance obligations and billing.

Our Understanding Your Irrigation Area Water Entitlements brochure will help irrigation customers understand water shares, delivery shares and water use licences. Understanding these important aspects of customer water management will help you get the right mix for your irrigation business today and into the future.

Both of these are available to read and download on our website [gmwater.com.au](http://gmwater.com.au)



# Surface drainage program kicks off

A range of customers in the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR) are set to benefit from a new Surface Drainage Program.

The SIR falls mostly within the Goulburn Broken catchment, and covers the Murray Valley, Shepparton, Central Goulburn and Rochester irrigation areas. The north boundary is the Murray River from Yarrawonga to just past Echuca, with the southern boundary generally following the irrigation districts.

The State Government-funded works will improve surface drainage – which will help farms to become more productive as water-logged areas gain better access to drainage.

The four-year program is being rolled out by GMW in partnership with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), and will focus on completing priority drainage works (primary and community surface

drains), improved on-farm drainage options and implementation of hybrid drainage systems.

GMW will start construction during August on two of the priority projects – which includes drainage work at Stanhope and Dhurringile. Two hybrid drainage projects are also underway which will see work taking place at Upper Deakin and Cornella Creek catchments during 2017-18.

Funding for the program was confirmed following a 2015 review of the SIR Drainage Strategy.

The hybrid approach is a more cost-effective approach to drainage based on improving linkages to, and increasing effectiveness of, natural drainage courses.

A key principle of the program is ensuring projects are prioritised and developed in areas across the SIR that have a long-term future in supporting irrigated farming.

## Talk to us at the Elmore Field Days

GMW will again be attending the Elmore Field Days in October as an opportunity to meet face-to-face with our customers and to raise awareness about our services.

GMW Business Performance Coordinator Sam McKenna said the field days had proven a great success in the past for engaging with customers on issues that were important to them.

“It’s also a chance for us to show what we do and the services we provide to our customers,” Sam said.

# Site 493

**Tuesday 3, Wednesday  
4 and Thursday  
5 October 2017**

Elmore Events Centre, 48 Rosaia Road, Elmore.  
For more information visit [elmorefielddays.com.au](http://elmorefielddays.com.au)

# Agency roles and responsibilities

Understanding water authorities opens up a world of acronyms – GMW, GWV, GB CMA, NVRM and MDBA, just to name a few.

All these authorities have their own distinct roles and responsibilities when it comes to managing water. They also work together to ensure this precious resource best serves our communities, our industries and our environment.

To help our customers understand the water authorities at work in our region, and most importantly what they do, we've developed this guide.



## Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW)

We are a rural water authority charged with capturing, storing and delivering water to customers who own a water entitlement. GMW also maintains the infrastructure needed to do this, including dams, weirs, pipelines, irrigation channels, gates and meters.

Our operating region is centred on northern Victoria and covers about a third of the state. Within our region are about 70 per cent of Victoria's storage water resources and about 50 per cent of its groundwater resources.

Our major customers comprise of irrigators who grow food and country customers who require water for stock, pets and gardens. We also supply urban water authorities to serve cities and towns in our region and environmental water holders, who have purchased water entitlements to maintain the health of rivers, streams and wetlands.

We have many smaller, diverse customers including ski resorts, trout farms, hydro electricity companies, nurseries and other enterprises that require water for their operations.

The tariff we charge customers for capturing, storing and delivering their water funds our operations and maintenance programs.

GMW also manages water storages in our region, many of which are inland recreational lakes known as much for water-skiing as irrigating. These responsibilities range from leasing land to licensing houseboats and maintaining public amenities.



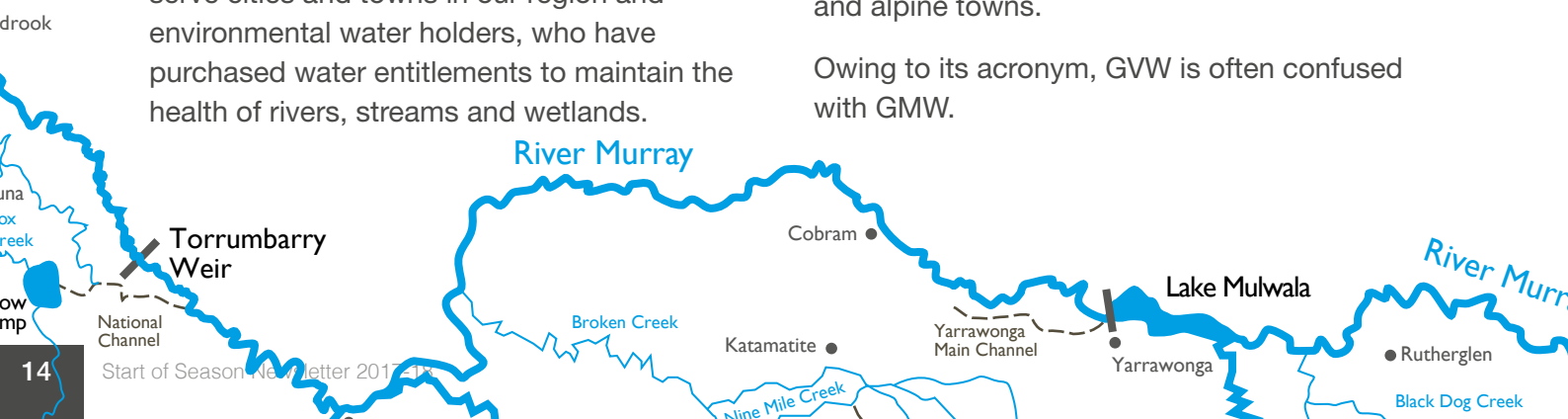
## Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) and urban water authorities

For these organisations, think turning on the tap and flushing the toilet. These are urban water authorities providing drinking water and wastewater services to towns and cities in our region.

GMW provides untreated water to 11 different urban water authorities – including some serving parts of Melbourne – but there are four that comprise the major customers in our region.

GVW treats water for Shepparton, Cobram, Seymour and Alexandra; Coliban Water serves Bendigo and surrounding towns; Central Highlands Water services Ballarat and surrounds; while North East Water serves Yarrowonga, Benalla, Wangaratta, Wodonga and alpine towns.

Owing to its acronym, GVW is often confused with GMW.





## Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)

There are 10 catchment management authorities (CMAs) across Victoria. CMAs work with the community to protect and improve the health of waterways and landscapes as well each region's productive capacity in a sustainable way.

The CMAs operating in GMW's region are: Mallee, North Central, Goulburn-Broken and North East CMAs.

The Goulburn-Broken CMA forms another acronym (GBCMA) and, owing to its use of "Goulburn", is again sometimes confused with GMW.



## Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID)

This is the celebrated "foodbowl" of Australia, located wholly within GMW's region of operations.

The GMID is the most intensely irrigated district in Australia, accounting for more than \$9 billion in annual food and fibre production.

Almost all of Australia's pears, half of our peaches and apricots and a quarter of the country's milk comes from GMID farming operations. The lifeblood of these enterprises is water, which is captured, stored and delivered by GMW.

The irrigation channels used to manage water deliveries would, if laid end-on-end, stretch from Sydney to Perth and halfway back again.



## Northern Victoria Resource Manager (NVRM)

The Resource Manager makes seasonal determinations for all regulated river systems in northern Victoria (Goulburn, Broken, Campaspe, Loddon, Bullarook and Murray systems).

Seasonal determinations are the amount of water available to an entitlement holder, depending on weather, historical data and supply. It is expressed as a percentage and also referred to as an "allocation".

The Victorian Government appointed GMW as the NVRM. This function is delegated to GMW Manager Water Resources Mark Bailey. His determinations are a separate NVRM function from GMW's wider business activities.



## Murray-Darling Basin Authority

### (MDBA)

A national water authority, the MDBA was established in 2007 to deliver a national plan for water security and sustainability for water use in the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Plan also included the agreement of the ACT with the Commonwealth, Queensland, NSW, South Australia and Victoria. It aims to balance the productive needs of the basin, its communities and environment.

The plan remains in place today and includes trade-offs to states and their farming communities to counter the cost of returning water to the environment.

In our region, this investment is called the Connections Project. It used to be known as yet another acronym called NVIRP (or the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project).

The Connections Project is a \$2 billion investment in modernising the GMID to ensure an efficient and sustainable future for productive agriculture in northern Victoria, with works continuing to 2020.



# Helping improve irrigation system efficiency



A reliable water supply is important to our customers and this winter we conducted three aquatic weed spraying programs along a number of channels in our Central Goulburn, Shepparton and Murray Valley irrigation areas.

Aquatic weeds such as Arrowhead, Ribbonweed, Blunt pondweed and Floating pondweed can choke the irrigation channel network. The weeds affect water flow, promote silting and cause problems with automated regulators which can reduce our ability to deliver water to customers.

These treatments will help achieve better flow rates in our channel network in to the future, enabling more efficient delivery of water for our customers during the upcoming irrigation season.

Thank you to those customers affected by the treatment programs. We appreciate your patience and support.



## Payment assistance available

We understand that some of our customers, from time to time, face challenging times.

This may be the nature of farming, but every situation is unique. Should these challenges result in financial hardship, we are committed to helping and partnering with our customers to help you manage your account and relieve some of the pressure you may be experiencing.

To help get you started, we have developed a dedicated webpage, [gmwater.com.au/payment-assistance](http://gmwater.com.au/payment-assistance), that details our Debt Management and Hardship Procedures:

- Our Debt Management Procedure sets out the rights and responsibilities of both GMW and our customers in relation to the management of outstanding debt.
- The Hardship Procedure sets out the rights and responsibilities of GMW, in relation to customers who are experiencing genuine financial hardship in paying their account. It aims to ensure that customers identified as experiencing genuine financial hardship are treated fairly and are protected from GMW's debt recovery actions while they continue to make payments according to an agreed schedule.

For more information please phone 1800 013 357 and we will work with you to develop a plan based on your individual circumstances to help you manage payment of your account.



# Improving our engagement

At GMW we're committed to improving the way we engage with all of our customers and stakeholders, along with regional industry representatives and community leaders.

It's a topic that's raised with our business' leaders regularly. The Essential Services Commission (ESC) – the independent regulator who approves all Victorian water authorities pricing and services – has also made it very clear working with customers to develop future pricing submissions is non-negotiable.

"We know that working together will ensure we're not only meeting our customer and stakeholder expectations, we're creating positive outcomes for our business and our region," GMW Managing Director Pat Lennon said.

"This is why we're currently doing a lot of work to improve the way we engage."

## What we've done

### Step one

We completed a Customer Segmentation project that identified 11 clear customer groups.

### Step two

Next we completed a Customer Needs Analysis that provided us with a detailed understanding of the needs and preferred engagement approaches of our customers.

We spoke to all of our customer types and this information will help us identify where we need to change our engagement to meet our customer and stakeholder needs. We also surveyed more than 500 customers, which backed up the customer needs analysis.

## The next step

The insight obtained through the Customer Needs Analysis is crucial to ensuring our engagement approach is tailored to the ranging needs of our customers, community and stakeholders.

We will be working with our customers to seek ways to enhance our engagement at all levels. Consideration will be given to improving how we engage more broadly across our customer and stakeholder base to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. We will also be working to likewise improve our staff engagement.

## Our engagement principles

- **Fit for purpose.** We recognise that not one size fits all when engaging customers, community and stakeholders.
- **Genuine and transparent.** We will be open and honest about the scope and purpose of engagement through proactive and purposeful communications.
- **Inclusive and accessible.** We will be approachable and provide an environment where diverse opinions and perspectives are able to be freely and fairly expressed and heard.
- **Continual improvement.** We will understand the effectiveness of our engagement activities and use information gathered to review and continually improve our efforts over time.

# New faces on our Water Services Committees

**Our Water Service Committees (WSCs) consist of customer representatives from across our region. Each representing a defined area, they work with GMW to help us better understand the issues and service expectations of customers.**

We have recently welcomed four new WSC members - Karen Moroney to the Kiewa, Mitta Mitta and Upper Murray Regional WSC, Jeanette Naylor to the Loddon Valley WSC, Alistair Whittington to Murray Valley WSC and Ashley Galt to Shepparton WSC.

We wish to thank three retiring WSC members following years of service to their communities. We farewell Ian Klein, who has served on the Shepparton WSC for an impressive 18 years, and Allan Mann and Paul Mundy, who have served for six years respectively on the Loddon Valley and Murray Valley WSCs.

We value the range of skills and knowledge our WSC representatives bring to the table. For more information on our WSCs please visit [gmwater.com.au/wsc](http://gmwater.com.au/wsc)

## CENTRAL GOULBURN WSC

**With 150mm of rain over three days, our season was away with water sitting in blind hollows comparable to the wet years of the 1970s.**

After a promising start and then the driest June on record, plus a series of frosts, we found ourselves in the position of having water lying around but in need of rain.

Consistent showers throughout July and August put us in an improved position, with a reasonable volume of water in storage but an unusually high proportion (750Gl) already committed in carryover – 50 per cent more than last year.

Low allocations are a bit of a concern, but good rains and inflows over spring are required to rapidly boost this.

Changes to the GMW hierarchy shows greater recognition of problems facing GMW and its customers, and promising overtones of a more open and customer friendly direction.

The Connections Project also received a new hierarchy. While admittedly they inherited a project in difficulty, it appears a more practical and realistic approach will be taken. As a customer representative on the advisory committee, I would like to see Connections have a more balanced approach towards an irrigation infrastructure project. I advocate for a balanced outcome

between water savings objectives and long-term lower cost outcomes for GMW, as cost impacts will be passed on to customers.

The WSC is advocating an urgent review of issues like water security, delivery share and carryover. A review of delivery share has started and the need to address water security has been recognised by those in authority. I will be advocating to DELWP for carryover.

The WSC has been advocating for GMW to expand their revenue base outside their customer base – an exploration of options has begun.

Irrigators are going through a period of rapid and enormous change and I urge everyone to respond to the challenges we are facing. Great battles can be won through a series of small victories.

**Peter Hacon, Chair – Central Goulburn WSC**

### Central Goulburn WSC contact details:

Peter Hacon  
(Chair)  
0427 596 278

David Kerr  
(Deputy Chair)  
0438 531 150

Murray McDonald  
0417 370 767

Ray Sellwood  
0428 559 320

Stuart Young  
0407 560 795

Greg Perry  
0419 376 514

Daniel Mongan  
0409 490 369

Ruth McGrath  
0438 034 477

Susan Wearden  
0427 517 170

# LODDON VALLEY WSC

**Another August is upon us, another low opening allocation as we lead into the recognised irrigation season.**

After so many years of low starts to the season, you would think that this is becoming the norm.

However, as we have learnt from last year, things can turn around very quickly. It is still important that we continue to modernise our system and ensure that the most improvements possible are made. Any improvements to efficiency will assist in our allocation and ensure we have a long term future in Loddon Valley.

This winter has seen the continuation of the modernisation in our area – with 70 regulators being installed and a large amount of on farm works being undertaken. More customers will be able to utilise the modernised system and gain the benefits.

The irrigation district has again undertaken a large and extensive desilting program. This winter 35km of desilting was conducted in the channels, to help provide customers with a greater flow rate on farm. This has been ongoing for a number of years and we ask that customers are patient as there is still a large amount of channel to be desilted in the coming years for all customers.

**John Nelson**  
**Chair – Loddon Valley WSC**

## Loddon Valley WSC contact details:

John Nelson  
(Chair)  
0427 543 447  
Laurie Maxted  
(Deputy Chair)  
0428 551 332  
Chris Harrison  
03 5455 1251  
Jeanette Naylor  
0400 206 496  
Robert Moon  
0428 551 292  
Murray Haw  
0427 649 928  
Ken Pattison  
0427 534 158  
William (Bill) Diss  
0427 882 393  
Ronald Vinnicombe  
0448 472 663

# MURRAY VALLEY WSC

**The Murray Valley Water Services Committee continued to develop in 2016/2017, welcoming a new member.**

Alastair Whittington has a small farm in the Nathalia area and will be an asset to the committee. We'd like to recognise Paul Mundy's retirement. Paul has contributed a lot of time and effort on behalf of the Murray Valley irrigators.

It's important we get new members with enthusiasm and fresh ideas, if you would like to know more, contact the WSC members or the Cobram office.

During the past 12 months we've been involved in the 2017-18 Price Review with prices moving down on last year's fixed pricing. Input has been given for the draft Strategic Plan for the business.

The Connections Project reset commenced with a big Winter Works program for Murray Valley – including plastic lining, clay channel remediation, pipe lines, new meters and regulators. These measures improve water delivery, level of service and consistent flow rates. The project will focus

on-farm over summer to connect private irrigators.

Our advice to GMW is communication and detailed planning will be paramount for this project to succeed.

The commitment by WSC members has been excellent. All topics discussed benefit irrigators and the community. These can take time, and the efforts have rewards for Murray Valley.

On behalf of the WSC we would like to wish all irrigators a good season.

**Jason Andrew**  
**Chair – Murray Valley WSC**

## Murray Valley WSC contact details:

Jason Andrew  
(Chair)  
0412 690 982  
Patrick Connolly  
(Deputy Chair)  
0439 813 773  
Alan Hendy  
0428 178 682  
Paulette McIntosh  
0409 438 786  
Alastair Whittington  
0468 789 020  
Rodney McCracken  
0427 646 334  
Iwan Van Den Berg  
0419 368 267

# ROCHESTER-CAMPASPE WSC

**This season has commenced with a dry winter and unfortunately it looks like we are leading into a dry spring.**

The 2017-18 seasonal determination for the Goulburn system commenced at 36 per cent and more recently, has increased to 45 per cent.

On a more positive note, due to the wetter 2016 season, there was 77GL carryover compared to only 30GL carryover in the previous year in the Rochester irrigation district.

Construction activities on GMW's Connections Project will continue during the irrigation season with numerous meter installations occurring and advanced planning being undertaken on five new pipelines.

Our local 2017 Winter Works program saw the upgrade of 29 regulator gates, four occupational crossing replacements, two road crossing replacements and two subways as well as about 1.5km of channel bank remodelling.

The dry weather has also enabled completion of local area spraying of weeds and the continued priority of desilting channels.

During the upcoming season I look forward to working closely with landowners and GMW in order to receive only the best outcomes for our region.

Our WSC members will continue to represent customers and provide advice and recommendations to GMW as required.

**Richard Anderson**  
**Chair – Rochester-Campaspe WSC**

## Rochester-Campaspe WSC contact details:

Richard Anderson  
(Chair)  
0428 832 210  
Bruce Macague  
(Deputy Chair)  
0429 833 801  
Peter Gibson  
0438 354 319  
Mark Hill  
0408 577 848  
Patrick Rochford  
0408 597 532  
Georgie Sims  
0409 546 224  
Dustin Kemp  
0417 605 313  
Stephen Randall  
0429 488 064

# SHEPPARTON WSC

**The Shepparton Irrigation Area saw a flurry of works over the winter months – desilting, bank remodelling, weed spraying and general maintenance, and capital program works.**

The East Goulburn Main required lowering to treat a specific variety of aquatic weed. GMW, in conjunction with Fisheries Victoria and local recreational angling clubs, conducted a fish salvage operation. Live fish were transported and released to a number of nearby waterways including Victoria Park Lake, Kialla Lakes, Broken Creek and the Goulburn River, to enhance recreational fishing.

There was a number of works conducted to road bridges and occupational crossings as part of the capital program, to increase safety levels and prolong the life of the structures.

The recent precipitation has been most welcome, however the seasonal outlook is not that promising at this stage – so plan your irrigation needs and be mindful of usage.

**Craig Reynolds**  
**Chair – Shepparton WSC**

## Shepparton WSC contact details:

Craig Reynolds  
(Chair)  
0427 288 211  
Kevin Minogue  
(Deputy Chair)  
0427 283 278  
Ross Heywood  
0419 897 269  
John Horder  
03 5829 9454  
David Woodhouse  
0428 954 974  
Alan Strang  
03 5829 8481  
Tom Sexton  
0448 512 831  
Ashley Galt  
0427 592 610  
Rod Squires  
(Chair - Tungamah)  
03 5764 4342

# TORRUMBARRY WSC

**The Torrumbarry Water Services Committee has recently re-elected three members for 2017/18 – Kyal Siebert, Charlie Gillingham and myself.**

The future of irrigation direction and advocacy is very strong in our region with the addition of these members.

With the start of the season with 70 per cent allocation on the Murray system, there are opportunities to take advantage of this water for productive use.

Our Resource Manager recently informed us that inflow conditions in the last couple of months for the Murray are tracking between dry to very dry outlook, with a very dry winter to date – let's hope we have some increased rainfall in the coming months.

The Connections Project has set in place new guidelines and procedures which appear to provide a clear direction for engagement with irrigators.

The committee looks forward to the start of this season and welcomes any feedback from local irrigators.

**Guy Duncan  
Chair – Torrumbarry  
WSC**

## Torrumbarry WSC contact details:

Guy Duncan  
(Chair)  
0437 092 144

Ann Hodge  
(Deputy Chair)  
0427 680 486

Charlie Gillingham  
0457 719 874

Andrew Leahy  
0408 500 875

Timothy McNeil  
0427 570 215

Bernice Lumsden  
0418 578 908

Kyal Siebert  
0400 106 149

# OVENS/KING/MID-MURRAY REGIONAL WSC

**The 2017 season is definitely opposite to last year so far, with little rain and minimal run off into the Ovens and King catchments.**

We are hoping for good rainfall in August, September and October, as our irrigation allocation relies heavily on good spring inflows into Buffalo and William Hovell dams.

Just a reminder, if you are intending to access your spill water on the Ovens and King systems you must order water through WaterLINE [www.gmwater.com.au/waterline](http://www.gmwater.com.au/waterline). This will trigger the requirement for our diversion inspector to read your meter at the end of spill - very important. Then you start the usage of your high reliability water.

At our March RWSC meeting we were introduced to Sam Gitahi-Regional Engagement Officer at the Murray-Darling Basin Authority.

I felt Sam with being in this new position, it would be very important to show him around our irrigation area, showing him our large catchment areas with small storage dams and how efficient

we use our water allocation. I feel he may have influence in Canberra.

The RWSC raised issues of concern for irrigators in the northeast with the GMW MD, in order to influence the State Government and other authorities for additional funding and works in the area.

Hoping you all have a good spring.

**Malcolm Carson  
Chair – Ovens/King/  
Mid-Murray RWSC**

## Ovens/King/Mid-Murray RWSC contact details:

Malcolm Carson  
(Chair)  
0428 591 657

Peter Antonello  
(Deputy Chair)  
0417 344 619

Rodger Broderick  
0427 503 504

Sid Dalbosco  
0427 575 622

Raymond Park  
0419 381 535

Robert Cook  
0428 293 559

Bruce Johnsen  
0408 006 244

# KIEWA, MITTA MITTA AND UPPER MURRAY REGIONAL WSC

**After one of the driest June's in 50 years, and July being well below average, we all know that the coming summer stream flows is uncertain.**

I would like to welcome Karen Moroney from Little Snowy Creek onto the committee. She has worked on many rural committees and brings great knowledge.

Your WSC gives the North East a great opportunity to have real influence on the direction of GMW, with direct access to senior staff, board members and government departments.

We can influence water trading rules, pricing and perhaps in the future, access to cheaper electricity for pumping.

If you would like to know more about what we can do for you, or how you can be involved, please contact myself or one of your local committee members.

**Peter Serpell  
Chair – Kiewa, Mitta  
Mitta and Upper  
Murray RWSC**

## Kiewa, Mitta Mitta & Upper Murray RWSC contact details:

Peter Serpell  
(Chair)  
0428 289 356

Jason Reid  
(Deputy Chair)  
0419 424 260

Mac Paton  
0417 063 304

Steve Rigoni  
0418 436 993

Brooke McKimmie  
0411 415 671

Donald Crosthwaite  
0448 289 268

Gordon Nicholas  
0458 760 512

Karen Moroney  
0419 217 955

# GOULBURN-BROKEN REGIONAL WSC

**This has been a busy year for the WSC in the areas of groundwater management, the Broken System, Strategic Planning, and environmental water.**

Both the Eildon and Broken Management Plans were completed, and the West Goulburn Management Plan has commenced. We also saw an amendment to the Mid-Goulburn Management Plan, proving the flexibility and value of the management plan model.

The Broken system has been a focus, with emphasis on the system operating rules. The modelling of this system has been scrutinised and areas identified for further work include the possibility of introducing advanced allocation, increasing the 1,500ML temporary trade out rule to 5,000ML and also considering the opportunity to allow permanent trade out of the Broken system.

The Goulburn-Broken Regional Water Service Committee (GBRWSC) was instrumental in initiating the development of a Strategic Plan

for the diversions side of the business in recognition of our future challenges. The development of a GMW Strategic Plan will now include the diversion business and will shortly be delivered.

I would like to welcome Andrew Maffascioni, our newest member; Jo Anderson, our new Chair and Pat Lennon as MD. Our challenge still remains in finding members to join the WSC and I encourage women to become involved and have a voice.

**Craig Madden  
Chair – Goulburn-Broken RWSC**

## Goulburn-Broken RWSC contact details:

Craig Madden  
(Chair)  
0407 576 804

Wayne Spinks  
(Deputy Chair)  
0418 557 679

Mark Foletta  
0438 682 382

Alexander MacKenzie  
03 5796 2088

Menon Parameswaran  
0402 072 036

Craig Winnell  
0428 283 136

Andrew Maffasiconi  
0439 702 044

# LODDON WATER DISTRICTS WSC

**It's great to see some green growth around the district after what has been a near-record dry period.**

Having secure water supply from the pipeline has meant we've not needed to cart water for livestock, providing a valuable backup for many households domestic use as rainwater tanks ran dry last summer. While the blue-green algae didn't impact the Normanville pipeline, customers to the west were affected with a shortage of water to provide to stock or for house use.

The two pipelines continued to operate with a very reliable service during the past 12 months, with very little leaks or issues that affected water supply.

I would like to thank customers for continuing to use water from the system in a responsible manner. The two pipelines continue to function exceptionally well during periods when demand

increases across the two areas. If you experience issues please contact the GMW Customer Service Centre on 1800 013 357 to report it.

GMW is working towards developing a business case for the Mitiamo and surrounding water districts – to investigate the feasibility of a pipeline to provide stock and domestic water all year round.

**Garry Addlem  
Chair – Loddon Water  
Districts WSC**

## Loddon Water Districts WSC contact details:

Garry Addlem  
(Chair)  
0429 378 410  
Geoff Thomas  
(Deputy Chair)  
0429 18 29 59  
Roger Nolan  
0419 521 000  
Rohan Verley  
0400 389 505  
Margaret Brady  
03 5457 4220  
Jim Chalmers  
0487 376 336  
Deidre Schlitz  
0409 022 768  
Grant Malone  
0437 635 514  
Carl Chamberlain  
0427 577 220

# LODDON AND CAMPASPE REGIONAL WSC

**Customers within the Loddon and Campaspe catchments have seen an incredible turnaround in the available resources since the completion of the 2015-16 season.**

The outlook for 2016-17 was extremely dire. With the onset of heavy rains during the spring of 2016, our major western storages all filled and spilled, resulting in 100 per cent seasonal determinations.

Groundwater resources responded favourably, with the exception of the Newlyn zone within the Loddon Highlands WSPA, which again only achieved 75 per cent of licence volume. This zone continues to be the focus of the Loddon Highlands WSPA reference committee.

GMW has commenced work on developing a strategy for the business which will set the foundations for ensuring future sustainability through price affordability. We trust that this will strengthen ongoing regional growth in agriculture across all of our catchments.

As chair of the Loddon Campaspe Regional WSC I would like to express my sincere thanks to my committee members for their commitment to their respective customer categories through their ongoing representation. We are fortunate to have a diverse group of customers representing a wide geographic area.

Lastly, I wish all GMW customers groups a prosperous 2017-18 season.

**Norm Suckling  
Chair – Loddon  
Campaspe RWSC**

## Loddon and Campaspe RWSC contact details:

Norm Suckling  
(Chair)  
0429 345 324  
Andrew Maher  
(Deputy Chair)  
0427 378 217  
Garry Addlem  
0429 378 410  
Tim Harrington  
03 5439 7282  
Thomas Walsh  
0427 241 820  
Richard Carter  
0438 457 283  
Hilary Jankelson  
0418 361 630  
Ross McKinstry  
0427 434 743  
Karl Hooke  
0412 006 736

## GMW Customer Enquiries

### Email

[info@gmwater.com.au](mailto:info@gmwater.com.au)

### Phone

1800 013 357

### Website

[gmwater.com.au](http://gmwater.com.au)



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