

## Letter to Broken Valley Diverters

27 September 2021

### Survey of Broken System Water Entitlement Holders

Since mid-2020, a Project Steering Group made up of seven local entitlement holders – together with representatives from the Goulburn Broken CMA, North East Water, and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder – has been reviewing the management of irrigation and domestic & stock water supply in the Broken River system.

At the conclusion of the review, the project steering group should be in a position to provide recommendations to the Minister for Water about the future management of the system. The Group has been working closely with Goulburn-Murray Water and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

A key focus of the Group has been to look at the challenges facing water users, including

- the impact of ongoing dry conditions and low inflows
- low allocations early in the irrigation season
- large variability in water availability between seasons.

A lot of time has been spent looking at how the system operates, including the flows, downstream commitments, and the configuration of the system. There are no easy answers.

Flows in the Broken River system are made up of regulated releases from Lake Nillahcootie, as well as unregulated flows from all tributaries below Nillahcootie – including Holland Creek and Moonee Creek. Unregulated flows are a large part of the water in the system.

In the Broken River system, up to sixty per cent of the storage capacity in Lake Nillahcootie can be required to meet system and river losses and to make sure water can be delivered to entitlement holders for the whole season. Because of this, water available to be allocated to entitlements early in the season can be low, even if there are volumes in storage.

Climate change has been shown to have already impacted water availability across northern Victoria and this trend is likely to continue. Recently, there have been some very dry seasons in the Broken River system – two of the last five years have had allocations at less than 40 per cent for high reliability water shares.

The Broken River system is operated as an annual system and in the future, water availability will continue to be dictated by annual rainfall and inflows. In wet years allocations will be higher and occur earlier in the season, in drier years allocations will be lower and occur later in the season.

The configuration of the system and climate predictions suggest that diverters will need to manage through more variability in the future, and there could be more years with low water allocations.

In this context, the Group is taking on the difficult task of looking for ways to improve the viability and sustainability of the Broken River system so that water users can have more certainty to plan for the future.

To do this, the Group wants to understand how you are currently using your land and water in the Broken River system, your plans for the future and thoughts on the future of the region.

Independent researchers from The Primary Agency are conducting this survey on behalf of the Group. All entitlement holders in the system are being asked to participate

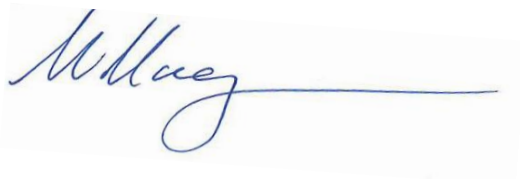
**Please be assured your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.** The survey will take approximately twenty minutes to complete and will be able to be accessed on Goulburn-Murray Water's 'Your Say' website from 4 October 2021 - <https://www.g-mwater.com.au/your-say-at-gmw>.

You will receive an email and a text message from Goulburn-Murray Water when the survey is open.

Once the results of the survey have been considered there will be an opportunity for you to comment on draft recommendations developed by the Group before a final report is submitted to the Minister for Water.

If you would like further information, please contact Markus Baggs Sargood, Senior Project Officer at DELWP at [rural.water@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:rural.water@delwp.vic.gov.au) or on (03) 8508 1679.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Maguire', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mick Maguire  
Project Facilitator  
The Primary Agency