

Department of Sustainability and Environment

Notice of applications for bulk entitlements to allocate water savings from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline

Questions and Answers

Q1. When was the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline completed?

A The Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline Project was completed in May 2010 and officially opened by the Premier and Minister for Water in April 2010. Work on Taylors Lake pump station continued after this date but is also now completed.

Q2. How much water will the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline save?

A The Wimmera Mallee Pipeline will save 103 gigalitres of water per year of which 83 gigalitres will be allocated for the environment and 20 gigalitres of additional water to meet the needs of the growing community. The pipeline will also improve the reliability of supply to towns and farms supplied off the pipeline.

These volumes are average figures estimated by modelling and are expected to be less in dry years.

For more information on the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline go to:

<http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/water-grid/wimmera-mallee>

Q3. How are the Wimmera Mallee pipeline water savings going to be allocated?

A The savings will be allocated to the water corporations to supply customers (Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, Coliban Water and Wannon Water) and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change for environmental entitlements.

This will be formalised by changing the existing bulk water entitlements held by the water corporations and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Q4. What are bulk entitlements and why are they changing?

A Bulk entitlements are statutory instruments which provide Victorian water corporations with a formal right to take and use water. They are granted under the *Water Act 1989* by the Minister for Water to water corporations and the Minister for Environment and Climate Change (water for the environment).

With the completion of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline, the water saved will be formally allocated to bulk entitlement holders in accordance with the process set out in the *Water Act 1989*.

Q5. How will Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water's bulk water entitlement change?

A Currently GWMWater holds two bulk water entitlements:

- one that allows GWMWater to take and store water in the Grampians storages

- and supply its rural and business customers; and
- one for supplying all GWMWater's towns

GWMWater has applied to have these two bulk water entitlements revoked and replaced with one new entitlement which combines the two purposes above.

The new entitlement will include an additional 20 gigalitres of water which is intended to meet the needs of growth in the region and also increase the reliability of supply for its existing urban, rural and commercial customers. It also includes several improvements:

- a change to the structure of the entitlements which clarifies responsibilities and improves the transparency of operational decision making by GWMWater; and
- new carryover and reserve rules to assist GWMWater to manage through droughts.

Q6. How will Wannon Water's bulk water entitlement change?

A Currently Wannon Water holds a bulk water entitlement to take water from Rocklands to supply Hamilton and several smaller towns.

Wannon Water has applied to have this bulk water entitlement revoked and replaced with a new entitlement allowing it to take its supply from the fully pipelined Wimmera-Mallee system.

The new entitlement will increase the reliability of supply for Wannon Water's towns. It also includes:

- a change to the structure of the entitlements which clarifies responsibilities and improves the transparency of operational decision making by GWMWater; and
- new carryover and reserve rules to assist Wannon Water to manage through droughts.

Q7. How will Coliban Water's bulk water entitlement change?

A Currently Coliban Water holds a bulk water entitlement to take water from the channel system to supply four small towns on the east side of the Wimmera-Mallee system – Wedderburn, Wychitella, Borung and Mysia.

Coliban Water has applied to have this bulk water entitlement revoked and replaced with a new entitlement allowing it to take its supply from the fully pipelined Wimmera-Mallee system.

The new entitlement will increase the reliability of supply for Coliban Water's towns. It also includes:

- a change to the structure of the entitlements which clarifies responsibilities and improves the transparency of operational decision making by GWMWater; and
- new carryover and reserve rules to assist Coliban Water to manage through droughts.

Q8. How will the environment's water entitlements change as a result of the

pipeline?

A Currently the Minister for Environment and Climate Change holds water entitlements for the Wimmera-Glenelg, Goulburn and Loddon river systems. These will be changed by this amendment process.

For the Wimmera and Glenelg rivers, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change has applied to the Minister for Water to have the environment's Wimmera-Glenelg bulk entitlement revoked and replaced with a new environmental entitlement.

The new entitlement for the Wimmera and Glenelg rivers will include the environment's existing entitlement plus additional pipeline savings to provide an average of 68.3 gigalitres per year to the environment.

The new Wimmera-Glenelg environmental entitlement also includes:

- a change to the structure of the entitlements to clarify responsibilities and improve the transparency of operational decision making by GWMWater; and
- new carryover and reserve rules to help manage through droughts.

In terms of the Loddon River, water that used to be taken from this river to supply the old Wimmera-Mallee channel system (via the Waranga Channel) will not be required due to the pipeline. This water will now contribute to the environment entitlement for the Loddon and Goulburn rivers.

Q9. How will Goulburn-Murray Water's bulk entitlement change?

A Goulburn-Murray Water's current bulk entitlement includes a commitment to supply water to GWMWater via the Waranga Channel. Due to the pipeline, a water supply via this channel is no longer required and Goulburn-Murray Water's bulk entitlement will change to reflect this.

Q10. How much water will the rivers get?

A The environment's allocation of pipeline savings is estimated at an average of 83 gigalitres per year. This will be shared across a number of rivers formerly associated with supply to the Wimmera-Mallee channel system :

- **Wimmera and Glenelg rivers** - approximately 68.3 gigalitres
- **Avon-Richardson and Avoca rivers** - approximately 5.5 gigalitres
- **Goulburn and Loddon rivers** – approximately 8.9 gigalitres

Q11. How will the environment's water be recognised?

A The environment's water for the Wimmera, Glenelg, Goulburn and Loddon rivers will be recognised in environmental entitlements. These entitlements are legal rights which define the environment's share of flow and separate it from the water corporations' shares of flow.

Environmental entitlements in the Avon-Richardson and Avoca rivers are not necessary because water corporations no longer have a share of the river flows.

Q12. What is environmental watering and why is it necessary?

A The environment has a legally protected share of water set aside to maintain, restore or enhance environmental values by re-instating some of the river's natural flow

patterns.

Environmental entitlements are subject to the same rights and obligations as other water users' entitlements. Using them does not affect the supply to farms and towns.

In drought, the use of environmental water is focused on avoiding loss of priority ecological species and communities and ensuring ecosystems can recover after the drought.

Without environmental watering in dry times, there is a real risk of species and communities continuing to decline or becoming extinct. At the other end of the spectrum, in wet years the focus is to provide high flows and floods to restore values that were not maintained in drier periods, such as fish breeding.

Q13. Who decides when and where environmental water is delivered?

A The delivery of the environment's water is determined by the local Catchment Management Authorities and is overseen by the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Parks Victoria is also involved if the area being watered is a national park.

Q14. Will the environment's water be used to fill lakes specifically for recreation?

A The waterway managers are not expected to use the environment's entitlement to fill recreation lakes unless they have high ecological values.

Q15. How will recreation lakes be supplied?

A As a result of the pipeline, GWMWater will be allocated an entitlement of 3 gigalitres for supply to recreational lakes formerly supplied by the channel system.

GWMWater has developed a process to prioritise the lakes to be filled each year from its recreational lakes allocation. GWMWater's bulk entitlement requires it to consult with the local communities and that the prioritisation process be open and transparent.

Q16. Will Lake Batyo Catyo be supplied with water under these new entitlements?

A Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water is currently developing a proposal in consultation with the North Central CMA and the local community to seek an entitlement to fill recreational lakes (other than those nominated to receive a supply from the 3 gigalitres recreational entitlement) such as Lake Batyo Catyo under the fully pipelined system.

Lake Batyo Catyo was supplied with water recently because under the existing entitlements the lake is part of the network of storages that supplied the channel system. The lake will not be part of this network under the new pipeline system so it can no longer be supplied with water in this way.

Q17. Are the pipeline savings affected by droughts?

A Yes. The volumes of savings were determined by computer modelling assuming that future inflows to the Wimmera-Mallee system are the same as long term average inflows recorded up until 2000.

The volume of savings allocated in any one year would be substantially less in very dry years.

The changed rainfall patterns since 1997 have had a huge impact on water supplies from the Wimmera-Mallee system and flows in the Glenelg and Wimmera rivers. The pipeline will not prevent shortages and water restrictions if there is a repeat of the last 13 years.

However, the magnitude of restrictions will be less severe with the pipeline.

Q18. How is the uncertainty about future rainfall and streamflows factored into the bulk entitlements?

A Schedule 2 in the bulk entitlements (the same in all the Wimmera Mallee bulk entitlements) describes how water is shared between the various bulk entitlement holders and other water user groups as water shortages increase.

All entitlement holders accessing water from the pipeline are treated equally as their allocations are reduced by the same proportion.

The new Wimmera-Glenelg bulk entitlements also include new carryover and reserve rules to assist the entitlement holders manage through droughts.

Q19. How is uncertainty about climate change factored into the bulk entitlement amendments?

A CSIRO's predictions under medium change by 2055 is a 35 per cent reduction on water availability for the Wimmera-Mallee system. This is less severe than a continuation of the climate of the last 13 years which averaged a 73 per cent reduction across the Wimmera-Mallee system.

Please refer to the answer to the previous question for impact on bulk entitlements.

Q20. Why can't the Glenelg River have its own environmental entitlement as a result of the pipeline savings?

A Currently there is a combined environmental entitlement for the Wimmera and Glenelg Rivers. This enables the waterway managers to assess the conditions and have flexibility with where and when they deliver the water in order to achieve optimal environmental benefits for the rivers.

However, a proposal for the Glenelg rivers to have its own environmental entitlement is being considered in the Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy.

Q21. Can I make a submission to the Minister on the bulk entitlement process?

A As there has already been an extensive community public consultation process on the pipeline project and the allocation of water savings during development of the project's business case, the Minister for Water is not calling for submissions.

Nonetheless, any submissions received by the Department of Sustainability and Environment as a result of the Public Notice before close of business Friday 24 September 2010 will be considered by the Minister for Water when he formally

determines the applications.

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