

Draft Strategy key messages

Overarching

- The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy is a 50 year plan. It is the region's response to future drought, and the uncertainty of climate change.
- The Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy is being developed in co-operation with the Northern Region community over 18 months.
- The Strategy is a three step process – we are currently in the second phase in releasing the Draft Strategy for public comment.

The Draft Strategy

- Community members and organisations can now respond to the proposals in the Draft Strategy and ultimately help shape how water resources are managed in the region.

- The Draft Strategy includes 57 proposals to change the way we manage and use our water.

- In keeping with Victoria's approach to water resource management, the Strategy aims to recognise existing rights and entitlements of all water users and the environment.

- Proposals in the draft strategy will protect the 24,000 high-reliability water shares held by northern Victorians.

- The Strategy aims to make sure we're getting the most out of our available water resources and give individuals more choice and flexibility in how they manage their own water supplies now and in the future.

- The volume of water carried over by irrigators has more than doubled between 07/08 and 08/09, to 273 billion litres.
- Northern Victorian irrigators are taking up the opportunities presented by the water market, with 16,000 transactions taking place between June 2007 and June 2008.

- Climate change is likely to be the biggest factor affecting water availability into the future. This Strategy looks at a range of future water scenarios and forecasts the potential impacts on all users and the environment.

Under the most severe climate change scenario, the Northern Region could face reductions of up to:

- 500 billion litres (30%) less water for Goulburn consumption users
- 1100 billion litres (almost 70%) less water for the environment in the Goulburn system
- 250 billion litres (15%) less water for Murray consumption users
- 2000 billion litres (almost 51%) less water for the environment in the Murray system
- The iconic Lindsay Island floodplain could be reduced by 70 per cent – which means less habitat for rare frog and turtle species.

Main Issues

Irrigators

- The Draft Strategy proposes measures to reduce the impact of reduced water availability by:
 - ensuring the irrigation distribution system runs every year – even through the worst droughts expected
 - providing maximum flexibility for individual entitlement holders to manage the risk of reduced water to their own enterprise – using tools such as carryover and trade
 - clarifying all existing entitlements to water, particularly during droughts

- The proposals in the draft strategy mean that instead of having 11 years out of 100 without opening allocations in the Goulburn system, we will always be able to open the season with an allocation.
- By putting water into reserve, we will be able to have an opening allocation in 95 years out of 100 - instead of having 16 years out of 100 with zero allocations for the Murray systems.
- Additional options such as shortening the irrigation season and interstate contingencies can also be used to ensure an opening allocation in nearly every year.

Unreg/groundwater users

- The Draft Strategy proposes measures that will manage the impacts of reduced reliability for those who rely on unregulated rivers or farm dams by:
 - determining groundwater trigger levels and surface water flows that will prompt bans and restrictions to ensure available water is shared equitably
 - identifying new areas for reticulated supply to make sure water is delivered most efficiently

Domestic and stock water use

- The Draft Strategy is calling for community input on how to best manage the growing number of farm dams and groundwater bores being constructed and their impact on the reliability of existing water users across the Northern Region.

- Farm dams in the Upper Campaspe can capture up to 18 GL of inflows into Lake Eppalock- equal to half the volume of high-reliability water shares in the Campaspe system. Approximately 80 per cent of this is captured in unlicensed farm dams.

Environment

- There is already a range of projects to recover water for the environment with the potential to recover about 900 billion litres a year. The Strategy complements these projects by making sure we know where water should be recovered, how it should be used and what the benefits will be.

- 900 GL is enough to fill the MCG about 530 times.

Urban

- The Draft Strategy ensures secure supplies for towns and regional centres by maximising the opportunities available to urban water corporations, such as carryover and the use of the water market. The Draft Strategy emphasises the importance of

water conservation and efficiency.

- People in the Northern Region have reduced their household water use by 50 litres per person per day between 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 (down to 315 litres per day)

National plan

- The Strategy is Victoria's input to the Commonwealth's Basin Plan. While the Commonwealth Government will be final decision-maker on the contents of the Basin Plan, this Strategy plays an important role in consulting the community about the nature of these decisions.