

# MEDIA RELEASE



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## Mitchell River water situation update

East Gippsland Water is set to cease extracting water from the Mitchell River entirely in coming days, following a number of weeks where it has steadily cut back on the amount of water pumped.

Managing Director, Steve McKenzie, said, "We operate under strict licence conditions, and have been progressively reducing our pumping to ensure that environmental flows are maintained. With the amount of water flowing down the Mitchell steadily falling off during one of the region's warmest and driest periods on record, we are now reaching the point where we will stop extracting altogether.

"We rely on water from the Mitchell River to supply 22,000 residential customers, businesses and holiday makers in communities from Lindenow in the west through to Nowa Nowa, including the larger townships of Bairnsdale, Paynesville and Lakes Entrance.

"Thanks to good planning we currently have about 120 days of water available to carry our customers through until the usual winter rains, and then we'll begin rebuilding our water reserves for next summer.

"We learnt from experience some 12 years ago that you can't rely on water flows or good water quality during extreme events like drought and bushfires. As a result, we built resilience into our water supply, by implementing a multi-million-dollar investment program designed to go some way to 'drought-proofing' our water supply systems. This included constructing a state-of-the-art water treatment plant at Woodglen (north west of Bairnsdale) and upgrading water storage facilities across East Gippsland.

"We focus on extracting most of our water from rivers during winter and spring, when river flows are greatest, and storing this in off-stream storages for use over summer.

"Over the last 10 years our customers have reduced their average water use by 20% and we also recycle 100% of the wastewater we collect and treat, mostly for agricultural use".

"Having said that, we're constantly monitoring the water situation and it's clear that we're facing an increasingly unpredictable long term climate and water outlook. It's appropriate therefore that our customers look closely at their water needs in the home and garden to see how they can minimise consumption and conserve our region's precious water resources as we focus on the future.

"Our water supply is a precious and limited resource and we need to continue our trend of using less water and maintain the habit of using water efficiently. This will become even more important as we experience additional challenges associated with climate change, extreme weather events and population growth.

"While we haven't reached a trigger point for implementing compulsory water restrictions this year, customers are reminded that mandatory Permanent Water Saving Rules do apply. For example, this means not using a sprinkler system to water the garden, unless it's between 6pm and 10am, and then please only if you need to. "

For more information on Permanent Water Saving Rules and other water efficiency tips please visit the website [egwater.vic.gov.au](http://egwater.vic.gov.au)

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