

MEDIA RELEASE



Contact: Ronan Carroll Ph: 5150 4434 / 0428 539 303

20 March 2019

Water situation update

East Gippsland Water is urging customers to review their water needs in the home and garden as the region continues to experience unprecedented dry conditions.

The corporation's Managing Director, Steve McKenzie, said, "These have been challenging times, with water levels in many of our rivers abnormally low. This includes the Mitchell River which we rely on to supply residential and business customers in communities eastwards from Lindenow through to Nowa Nowa, including the larger townships of Bairnsdale, Paynesville and Lakes Entrance. Indeed, we have ceased extracting water from the Mitchell altogether, following a number of weeks where we steadily cut back on the amount of water pumped.

"Fortunately we haven't yet reached a trigger point for implementing compulsory water restrictions in any of our water supply systems, because of careful forward planning.

"Over recent years we built resilience into our water supply - implementing a multi-million-dollar investment program that included doubling the size of our water storage at our Woodglen water treatment plant (north west of Bairnsdale) and upgrading other facilities across East Gippsland.

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

"Currently we have around three-to-four months supply to meet customer demand heading through autumn and into winter. This is proving invaluable to address customers' needs over the shorter term.

"We have also been supplying an increasing number of rural customers, who rely on the urban supply from our standpipes or via water carters, to refill dams and water tanks. This includes assisting those people affected by tank water contamination caused by bushfire ash.

"However, there is no room for complacency. It's clear that we're experiencing a significant draw on our supplies. We are also facing an increasingly unpredictable climate and water outlook. There is still the possibility of compulsory water restrictions in coming months if there is no rain. This could include restrictions on garden watering, car washing and filling swimming pools, depending on rainfall in the next few months.

"It's important that customers look closely at water use habits and needs in the home and garden to see how they can minimise consumption.

"While we may not have compulsory restrictions yet, Permanent Water Saving Rules do apply across the region. This means not using a sprinkler system to water the garden, unless it's between 6pm and 10am, and then only if you need to. It also means not cleaning hard surfaces such as driveways, paths or decking, unless absolutely necessary."

Customers are encouraged to visit East Gippsland Water's website egwater.vic.gov.au for more information about how to be water efficient, including links to Smart Approved Watermark advice, which also covers water efficient products. Alternatively call 1800 671 841.

Ends