

MEDIA RELEASE

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Planning for another dry summer

Recent rain events and a steady reduction in water use have brought a welcome improvement in the water supply situation for East Gippsland Water customers across the region.

The corporation's Managing Director, Steve McKenzie, said, "While this is promising, we cannot afford to be complacent and we are already planning for another potentially dry summer. The East Gippsland region traditionally benefits from a very reliable water supply and temperate climate, but we are not immune from consecutive dry years and climate variability.

"Our long term water resource planning looks 50 years ahead and aims to ensure water restrictions are not required, on average, more than once every ten to fifteen years. Our planning takes into account climate change and helps us identify when to build new water storages ahead of when they are required. Water restrictions are a short term tool, and while not necessary at the moment, may be required from time to time to carry us through consecutive dry years.

"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.

"We temporarily ceased pumping from the Mitchell River early in March, at which point we held about 1,500 million litres of water in dams at our Woodglen Water Treatment Plant (north west of Bairnsdale). This translated to 3-4 months of water in storage to carry us through to winter and spring rains. The Mitchell system supplies customers in communities eastwards from Lindenow through to Nowa Nowa, including the larger towns of Bairnsdale, Paynesville and Lakes Entrance.

"We are now pumping intermittently from the Mitchell River, as flows in the river allow.

"Over recent years we built resilience into our supply by doubling the size of our off-stream storage at Woodglen Water Treatment Plant, as well as upgrading other facilities across East Gippsland.

"The current, very dry situation serves to remind us that we are facing an increasingly unpredictable climate and water outlook. We ask customers to continue to be cautious with their water use as we prepare for a potentially dry summer again next year.

"Permanent Water Saving Rules do apply as a minimum. 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 washing down 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 any updates on the water situation and for 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.

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