

MEDIA RELEASE

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



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Water restrictions likely from January for Mitchell River and Buchan customers

It is now very likely that East Gippsland Water customers served by the Mitchell River supply system* - and those in Buchan - will be on water restrictions from January.

Recent rain has provided only a short delay to the introduction of restrictions, which were previously anticipated as early as December.

East Gippsland Water's Managing Director, Steve McKenzie, said, "The Bureau of Meteorology forecast is not indicating any significant rainfall in coming weeks and the three month forecast is grim. Unless we get significant rain soon, a date to commence water restrictions in January will be announced before Christmas, to allow customers to prepare and adjust.

"Water flows down the Mitchell - which supplies customers in Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville, Metung, Bruthen and surrounding communities - were running at just 360 million litres per day on Monday 2 December. This is about half the normal flow at this time of year.

"We recently surveyed customers, about their attitude to water restrictions and an overwhelming 90 percent of respondents supported restrictions to conserve water and wanted to take action early. We're taking on board their clear feedback.

"We know from last year the Mitchell can drop rapidly and we may need to cease pumping from the river. We have a four stage restriction model and if restrictions are necessary we will be looking to go straight to Stage 2. This will be accompanied by the installation of water restriction signage at the entrances to all towns affected.

"Stage 2 water restrictions mean no watering of residential lawns at any time. They also mean no watering of residential garden areas except by means of a bucket, watering can, or hand-held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle; with the use of a watering system only being permitted on alternate days, between 6am-8am and 6pm-8pm.

"We appreciate that water restrictions will impact on customers passionate about their gardens, as well as on sporting clubs and businesses such as those involved with garden maintenance, swimming pool construction and car washes. Therefore, we strongly encourage everyone likely to be affected to plan accordingly.

"To assist, a summary of water restrictions will be distributed to all customers served by the Mitchell River supply system in coming weeks.

"We have prepared for a hot, dry summer and have four to five months of water stored. Importantly, managed water restrictions could add another month to our reserves.

"We greatly value customers' efforts to voluntarily reduce water use by two buckets per day to help conserve precious water reserves, after we put out the call five weeks ago. We strongly encourage them to maintain their water saving efforts."

More follows/...

It should be noted that all of East Gippsland is currently covered by Permanent Water Saving Rules, which apply every day of the year when formal restrictions are not in force. These rules will continue to apply for the communities of Orbost, Newmerella, Marlo, Bemm River, Cann River, Mallacoota, Omeo, Swifts Creek and Dinner Plain for the time being. They are not currently facing the prospect of restrictions, though we are mindful that this situation may change as we progress through summer.

The cooperation of customers is greatly appreciated at this challenging time. Further water situation updates will be provided over coming weeks. In the meantime, for tips on how to save water please visit the East Gippsland Water website www.egwater.vic.gov.au. In addition, anyone with a query about water restrictions can contact our Customer Business Team on 1800 671 841 during office hours.

* *The Mitchell River supply system = Bairnsdale, Walpa, Lindenow South, Lindenow, Eagle Point, Newlands Arm, Paynesville, Raymond Island, Sarsfield, Bruthen, Nicholson, Johnsonville, Swan Reach, Metung, Kalimna, Lakes Entrance, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust, Lake Tyers Beach, Nowa Nowa and surrounding areas*

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