

MEDIA RELEASE

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Replacing bushfire-damaged trees and infrastructure at the Mallacoota wastewater treatment facility

East Gippsland Water is about to commence essential bushfire recovery work at its wastewater treatment facility in Mallacoota – focusing on 47 hectares of fire-damaged tree plantation and irrigation infrastructure, which together play a key role in the operation of the site.

Established in the 1990s, the plantation enables the environmentally beneficial reuse of treated wastewater from the facility – with its mix of Australian native gum trees absorbing and providing a final filter for the wastewater.

The bushfires at the turn of the year caused major damage to the vital irrigation infrastructure serving the plantation, which now requires replacement. In addition, many of the trees suffered significant damage and are no longer able to do their job effectively. As a result, the harvesting of the trees – originally scheduled for 2023 – has been brought forward so that both issues can be addressed.

Between now and Christmas 15 hectares of the worst affected trees will be removed entirely – to be replanted by a mix of silver top, yellow stringybark and southern mahogany saplings (in autumn/winter next year). A further 32 hectares of trees will be coppiced - which means they will be cut off near ground level to stimulate healthy regrowth. This will enable the existing irrigation infrastructure to be accessed and replaced.

East Gippsland Water’s Executive Manager Capital & Service Delivery, Mark McNeil, said, “It’s important that we get this work completed as soon as possible to restore water reuse efficiency at the Mallacoota wastewater treatment facility and safeguard its effective operation to meet the needs of the local community going forward. Our aim is to have the tree removal and coppicing work finished before the Christmas holidays and the traditional influx of tourists to the town.

“Importantly we have enough wastewater storage capacity available at the facility to meet Mallacoota’s needs through to the project’s anticipated completion date.

“As a precaution, an environmental assessment has been carried out by a team of external specialists, to determine the presence of any koalas within the plantation. While none were sighted, a proactive management plan has been developed to safeguard the welfare of any koalas that may be discovered as the work progresses.

“The local community may notice an increase in truck traffic on local roads over coming weeks and we apologise in advance for any inconvenience this may cause.”

Anyone with a query about the project should contact East Gippsland Water’s Customer Business Team in the first instance on 1800 671 841, during office hours.

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