

Reflections on a very wet year

As 2022 comes to an end, we at East Gippsland Water are reflecting on what has been a challenging year. The unseasonably ongoing wet weather has provided difficulty in the management of all of our water systems.



Steve McKenzie,
Managing Director

While rainfall figures have been high ensuring there is no drought risk (for our water supplies) for the next few years, the increase in run-off entering the Mitchell River system caused difficulties with turbidity. This means the water treatment team had to selectively harvest water from the river when the water quality was at its best, to increase storage in preparation for the drier months.

Recycled water releases back into the environment were also an ongoing necessity during the year, with the heavy rainfall preventing the majority of East Gippsland Water's intensive farm irrigation program that normally disperses the recycled water to land for beneficial reuse.

We are pleased to report that controlled recycled water releases, required this year due to wet weather, at Bairnsdale, Cann River, Kalimna West, Omeo, Tambo Bay, and Paynesville have created sufficient space in our storages, to allow for the increase in wastewater generated in the festive season when East Gippsland experiences an influx of holidaymakers.

It is important to note however that further controlled releases may need to take place in the new year if the forecast high rainfall and La Nina continues or due to the rise in holiday visitors.



Metung farm bogged with mud and infested with tussock, July 2022.

Earlier in the year, we shared images of the incredibly sodden conditions at our Metung wastewater treatment facility, with vehicles bogged to their axles and irrigation impossible.

Ceasing irrigation for a short period and releasing the recycled water at Metung has allowed the farm to recover with hay recently harvested and normal farming operations resuming.

As indicated above, EGW will continue to do all things practical to manage the community's waste and practice environmental stewardship.



Metung farm rehabilitated, November 2022

While this year's flooding has required controlled emergency releases from several sites, it is foreseeable that similar extreme wet weather events will occur due to the forecast continuation of La Nina wet weather occurring this year and more frequently in the future due to the effects of changing climate.

We thank the community for its assistance and trust during these controlled recycled water releases. We regret having to make any releases from our farms, but they were imperative to prevent uncontrolled overflow and failure of our dams causing spills and damaging property and the environment.

Works plan for the future

The construction of a raw water tank and a new pumping station at the Buchan Water Treatment Plant is nearing completion.

The project will assist in future-proofing potable water supplies.

During natural disasters such as bushfires and floods, the quality of the water in local rivers decreases. This puts more pressure on the plants to treat the water to an acceptable potable standard.

The new 420,000 litre raw water tank will allow selective harvesting of raw water from the Buchan River when the water quality and flow are best suited to allow storage of water for future treatment.

This project is being funded as part of the Victorian Government's \$2.7 billion Building Works stimulus package, along with East Gippsland Water capital funding.

Helping you with your water bills

Customers need to be aware of a change to the billing cycle this quarter. To allow for the Christmas period, your next bill will be for 98 days of water and wastewater service supply, rather than the usual 90 days. For those budgeting for their next water bill, you will need to budget for 98 days instead of the normal 90.

If at any time you are struggling to pay your water bill, we have a range of options via our Customer Financial Assistance Program to help.

We can set up regular instalments to your water account via Centrelink's CentrePay service. For anyone experiencing a temporary financial crisis, we have the Utility Relief Grant Scheme available to those on low incomes, who have a Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card.

We also offer payment plans, a Pay and Save Plan, and options available to customers experiencing family violence.

Please be assured that your details and circumstances remain confidential. All you need to do is give us a call on 1800 671 841 and ask for someone to assist you.

Opt for email

If you would prefer to receive your bills via email, visit our website and click on Change billing details, or give us a call.

Reducing your water consumption

The Community Rebate Program is a Victorian Government initiative aimed at reducing eligible applicants' water bills by providing a free water usage audit and as a result of the water audit repairing or replacing inefficient water fittings up to the value of \$1,000.

The program aims to educate customers on the benefits of water efficiency and where necessary, may include:

- replacing washers on leaking taps;
- installation of flow control valves or aerators to reduce water flow;
- repairing minor leaks;
- installation of a water-efficient shower rose of 4 Star WELS rating or better;
- repairing faulty or inefficient toilet cisterns; and/or
- minor adjustments to hot water services

A licensed plumber will conduct a water efficiency audit. Following this audit, if appropriate, a licensed plumber will undertake retrofitting as detailed above, at no cost to the customer.

If you would like to improve your water efficiency and drive down your bills, contact us for more information.

Expansion creates opportunities

To ensure we continue to provide a high level of service to our customers and the community, our workforce at East Gippsland Water is expanding its workforce.

We have some exciting roles available now and more coming up in 2023.

This is an exciting opportunity to join our team and make an important contribution to the community while building a career in a high-growth area with abundant natural resources and great plans for the future.

Look out for upcoming opportunities to join the team at East Gippsland Water on our website at egwater.vic.gov.au/careers



East Gippsland Water trainee Abby Matthews at the Woodglen Water Treatment Plant.

Water snapshot

A total of 1510 million litres of water is available or ~78% of the total water storage capacity.

Town/water supply system	Current stream flow (million litres/day)	5 year average stream flow (million litres/day)	Rating of current flow	Current flow as a percentage of 5 year average
Bemm River	596.5	546.1	Average	109%
Betka River	11.3	32.8	Low	35%
Brodribb River	356.4	219.0	Average	163%
Buchan River	443.9	470.8	Average	94%
Butchers Creek	9.4	7.0	Average	134%
Cann River	290.2	180.0	Average	161%
Mitchell River	3068.4	1297.0	Above Average	237%
Tambo River	391.7	202.6	Average	193%

* Mitchell 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.