

Macalister Irrigation District peak demand

The season

The Macalister Irrigation District season began with record high deliveries on 15 August, then moved to high levels of rain from October to January.

The early season rainfall resulted in a spill being declared in October, which ran to the end of the spill period on 15 December.

The season also saw farmers carrying 100 percent high reliability water volume available, as well as some low reliability water being announced.

All farmers held 100 percent of their water allocation leading up to mid-January and had saturated soil profiles.

Allocation

- 100% HRWS on 1 July 2023
- 100% HRWS, 5% LRWS 15 December

Conditions

Weather conditions in the region have changed from the wet early summer conditions to becoming hotter and drier, and our customers want to make the most of their available water volumes to irrigate their properties.

As soil moisture levels have dropped across multiple areas of the district at similar times, we've seen a continued influx of water orders and continued high water demand.

In addition, farmers have shortened the time between irrigations and are not drying off land as would be common in drier years because they have more water available to them than is typical for this time of year.

These circumstances have meant our system is running at maximum capacity, and we are scheduling orders to maximise the channel capacity.

How customers can order water

The Demand Management System allows customers to order and cancel their own water.

We encourage customers to give us a minimum of three days' notice for water orders.

Customers can order water up to 14 days in advance, however cancelling or changing orders at short notice can lock up the system for other customers.

We encourage customers to order follow on orders and continuous flows. An increase in lifestyle orders (Example: 5am – 6pm for three days = 39 hours, rather than 39 continuous hours) creates periods through the night where it may not be possible for others to utilise the system, when they are requesting continuous flows.

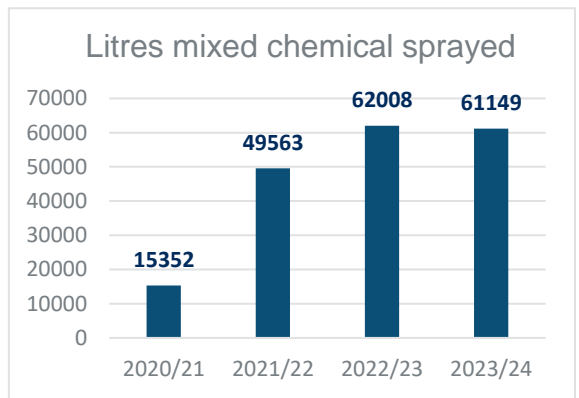
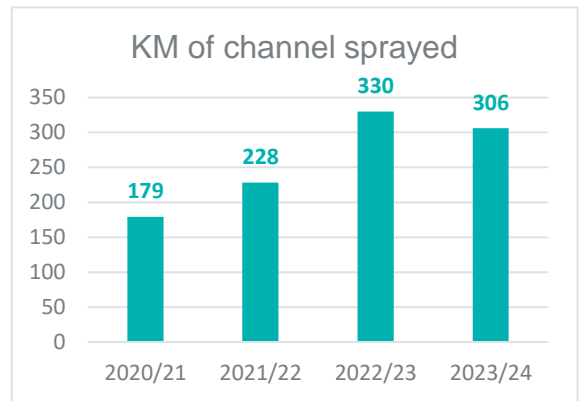
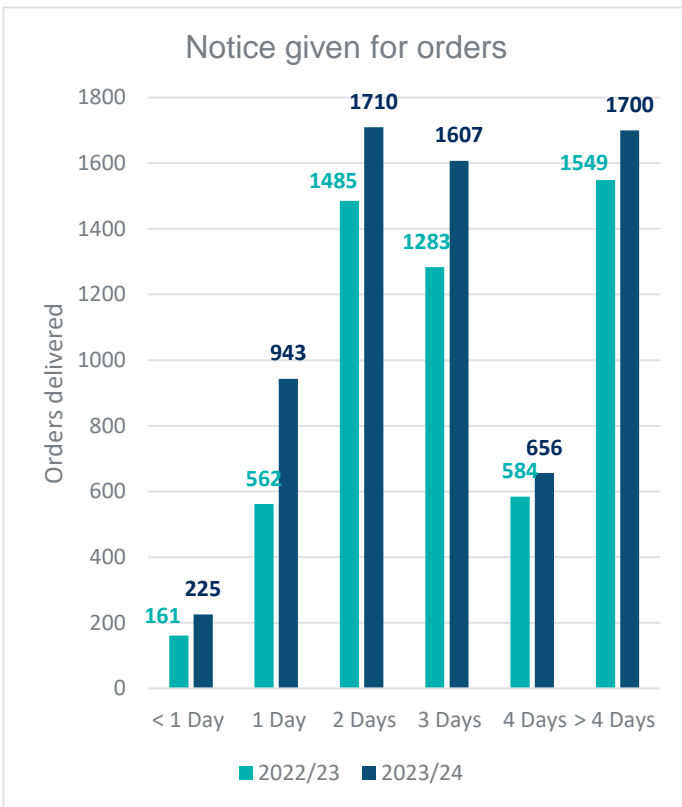
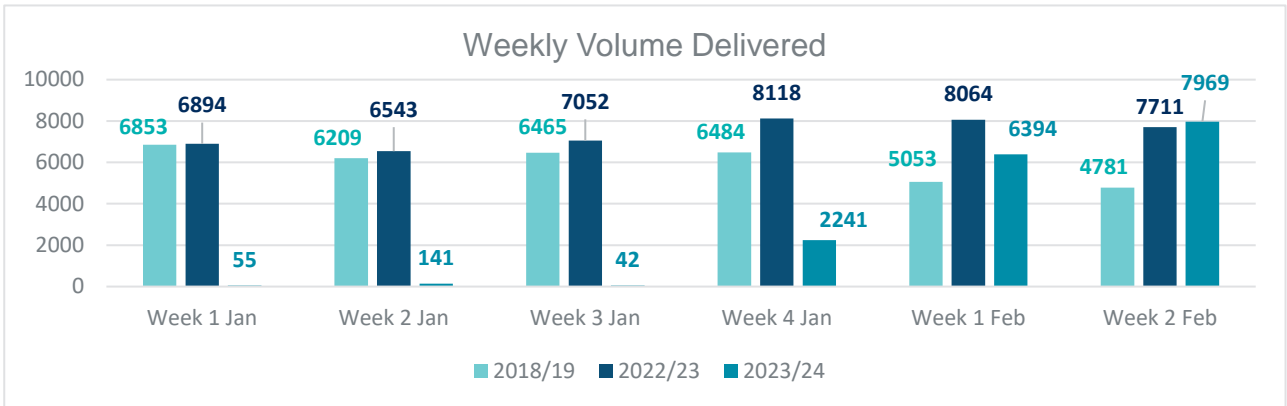
The Total Channel Control System minimises the need for manual intervention to operate channels and results in drastically reduced outfalls. However, this means capacity in the system is slightly reduced and is especially noticeable during peak times.

Water delivery

The irrigation system is running at maximum capacity, with all orders delivered. This season, 92 percent of orders have been delivered on the confirmed order delivery date.

The table shows orders delivered on the confirmed delivery date and those moved to an alternative day up until 31 January 2024.

On day ordered	6322
Held 1 day	247
Held 2 days	44
Held 3 days	77
Held 4 days	45
Held 5 days	47
Held 6 days	26
Held 7 days	22
Held 8 + days	14
TOTAL	6,844



How we're working to improve the system

We have discussed high demand challenges with the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee (MCCC) and have made changes to support improved outcomes.

- We have adjusted the maximum order lead time from 31 days to 14 days. This adjustment will give customers a more equitable ability to access channel capacity.
- We engaged a specialist consultant to conduct a wide-ranging review of our channel system operations to identify efficiencies and improvements. We will discuss the report's recommendations with the MCCC.
- We are trialling a new weed treatment through winter to manage weeds in the channels and we're using a weed cutter.
- We've improved our weekly snapshot report by removing data that was giving a false impression of the system's capacity status during high demand periods.
- We're developing internal key performance indicators to help optimise our water delivery performance.

Working together during high demand

Working together can ensure we can maximise our system capacity, and support getting water to all customers in the best possible way. make things easier for everyone.

We recommend:

- Planning watering in advance and allowing three or more days to place orders.
- Trying to avoid making speculative orders that might not be required.
- Cancelling unwanted orders in a timely manner to free up the system for other irrigators.
- Communicate early with water planners about follow on or order extensions.
- Taking water through the night to lower high loads during the day.
- Ensuring the flow rate, duration and outlet matches the confirmed order.
- Speak to water planners about filling on-farm storages and the best time and volumes to help support the entire system.
- Consider follow-on orders for multiple outlets, rather than ordering all outlets to start at the same time. Doing this creates opportunity for other irrigators to work in with their orders.

Your Macalister Customer Consultative Committee

If you want to share an idea or raise a concern the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee is your first point of contact.

Our members bring a wealth of experience across the dairy, horticultural and beef sectors that represent the diversity of agricultural customers we serve.

They are there to listen to you and support us to make decisions that service the district and community well.

We catch up with the committee regularly to discuss matters so they can report back to customers.

You can reach out to:

Name	Email	Phone	Area
Benn Thexton	benn@thextonfarms.com.au	0428495691	Nambrok/Cobains
Kate Lamb	Katelamb73@gmail.com	0427486259	Denison
Brad White	bradpwhite@gmail.com	0422224653	Riverslea
Bernard Coleman	bnjcoleman@aussiebb.com.au	0427411309	Riverslea
Tim Missen	missens@bigpond.net.au	0488483000	Denison
Christopher Van Den Dikkenberg	fuminafarms@bigpond.com	0458220122	Thomson River
James Clyne	Jclyne86@gmail.com	0428152936	Newry
Mark Coleman	markc@wellington.vic.qv.au	0437841104	Sale
Thomas Dwyer	thomasdwyer_98@hotmail.com	0455566890	Newry
Warrick Purdon	warrick.purdon@husseyco.com.au	0419878023	Newry/Bushy Park