

Welcome to **Diversions**, a newsletter for Southern Rural Water's groundwater and rivers customers. Some irrigation area customers may also receive this newsletter; we hope you find the information useful.

2016 Rural Water Award winners

Celebrating excellence in irrigation doesn't necessarily mean large-scale operations and mega-farms. Innovation can also be found in small-scale and niche operations, and also among the next generation, who know that water efficiency underpins long-term sustainability.

Both Southern Rural Water (SRW) finalists in the 2016 Rural Water Awards are prime examples of this kind of forward thinking, and also of the diverse range of our customers.



Innovative Hillywood branches out

Hillywood Tree Nursery of Briagolong took out the regional surfacewater category, with their efficient use of water from the Freestone Creek in Central Gippsland, north-east of Maffra.

Ed Mosley runs the nursery as a wholesale business, selling advanced native and exotic potted trees.

Hillywood was a lifelong ambition for Ed, who first came up with the idea while studying horticulture at university. "I'd spent my entire career working for other people. When we decided to move back to Victoria, I knew the time was right to start the business," he said.

The nursery was established on five hectares of the Mosely family farm, which also runs beef cattle.

Ed planned the site and then engaged an irrigation designer to help design a simple, efficient system focusing on both water and energy efficiency.

He then installed the system himself. "It was a 24/7 job for a long time, as I'm a one-man operation. It was hard work, but worth it to see the results."

The system is underground, consisting of main lines and sub-main lines with above-ground laterals. There are individual micro-spray stakes inserted into each pot, which are pressure-controlled and have a non-leaking valve. This ensures a uniform watering in each irrigation. As each pot has a stake, there is no run-off and the water delivery is completely controlled. This is the best option for larger potted trees.

The watering system was designed to optimise water usage using the best delivery method available, reducing energy consumption and reducing labour input. The addition of the water treatment has reduced the risk of water-borne pathogens entering the system and plant/crop infection and death.

Ed read about the Rural Water Awards in the local paper and decided to apply.

"It was a good opportunity to get recognised for the hard work that has been put into the nursery. The process was very easy – it probably only took half an hour. It's also given the business some more exposure, which is always good," he said.

Regional community and education winner



Nic Gowans
A Gardener's Company

A Gardener's Company, owned by Nic Gowans in Skipton was the regional Community and Education winner, also earning a special State Highly Commended award for their contribution to the local community.

He built **The Shamba**, a market garden on disused council land, to grow a range of seasonal heritage vegetables. The project also brings the story of food and farming to visitors with a schools and community education program about heritage produce and integrated water management.

"It is a heritage market garden where I have planted seeds from vegetables used in the past. They are 'time capsules' that tell the story of food.

"To me, the secret to happiness is not a big-paying job, but to work locally with people I enjoy, while focusing on family, friends and community. It's my small act of civilised disobedience in a consumer-based society," says Nic.

This project uses a combination of local water sources, including a decommissioned reservoir (Jubilee Lake), storm water and rainfall. It sits next to the Mount Emu Creek in the Victorian Volcanic Plains, which is a tributary of the Hopkins River. Nic's project carefully matches soils, aspect, infiltration and plant water use needs with application rates.

The project uses raised beds, low-pressure drip systems, irrigation scheduling and soil moisture meters.

"The vegetables that I will grow all have a story – they are heirloom varieties, which are scarce and belong to the public, rather than the corporate breeders. They are time capsules that bring back the food that our grandparents grew, cooked and ate," says Nic.

"There's honesty from good food and healthy soil."

SRW congratulates both our winners and we look forward to the next Awards in 2018.

There are four categories:

- Surfacewater
- Groundwater
- Irrigation District
- Community and Education

If you're interested in entering, keep your eye out for information early next year.

Automated meter readings

Groundwater and Rivers field officers are continuing their work on introducing new technology to automatically send meter data, which will help irrigators with their farm management.

The Taggle system comprises a low-cost, low power transmitting device that is attached to existing water meters and allows hourly data to be sent digitally via radio technology to high-sensitivity receivers. The data is then available to be viewed online and quickly and easily imported into our metering system.

This helps SRW to improve field operations productivity and reduce costs and safety risks to staff. While this data is not yet able to be accessed by customers, in future you will have the ability to access daily and hourly usage data. This information allow important decisions regarding resource management to be made quickly and easily.

A pilot project using the technology in the Warrion WSPA has been completed and provides SRW with confidence the system works effectively.

We are installing Taggle systems in these groundwater and surfacewater areas over the coming months:

- Denison
- Wa De Lock
- Sale
- Rosedale
- Avon River
- Deutgam
- Koo Wee Rup
- Bunyip River



Water license transfers

Why transfer water?

In many areas throughout Southern Victoria, water is fully allocated and new entitlements are not available. In these areas, the only option to get a new licence or increase an existing one, is to transfer from another licence holder.

Transfers are also a good way to obtain more water during a dry period when your existing licence volume is not enough. If you are not using your licence, transferring it to someone that needs water is a great way to support your local and regional communities by increasing food, fibre and regional productivity.

Transfers can be on a permanent or temporary basis. Temporary transfers in most areas can be for a period of 1 year up to a maximum of 5 years at any one time. These transfers work on the financial year.

Who can transfer water?

Water can be transferred between:

- existing license holders, or
- from an existing licence holder to a person without a licence.

Licence holders wanting to transfer water must apply to Southern Rural Water, and the application must be approved before the water is used.

Transfers can generally only occur within the same groundwater area or surface water catchment, with many areas being subject to specific transfer rules.

If you are unsure of the transfer rules in your area, it is best to contact us to discuss your proposal in more detail.

To apply to transfer water you must apply using the appropriate form, and submit the correct application fees.

Transfer of licence ownership – property purchase

Don't forget, a water licence is not automatically transferred with the sale of a property.

We strongly suggest that this is clarified with your real estate agent or solicitor and noted in the contract of sale before signing property purchase documents.

A properly completed transfer application form must be submitted to SRW before a licence will be transferred, regardless of what appears in a sale contract.

You or your agent can apply for an information statement from us to confirm water licence details linked to the land, tariffs applicable to the licence and also any outstanding monies or debts.

How are prices set for water transfers?

The price for the water needs to be negotiated between the seller and buyer. SRW has no role in transfer price negotiations.

Water trading

Watermatch

Watermatch is a free service for customers and others seeking to trade water.

“Watermatch” is an online trading forum that irrigators to either buy or sell water in southern Victoria. You can do this either on a temporary (seasonal) basis, or permanently.

Anyone can easily register their interest in buying or selling water in different systems. They can also register for automatic notifications whenever water becomes available to buy or sell in a particular area.

People who are not internet users can use the service by talking to SRW staff to arrange an entry.

Watermatch can be used for the Macalister, Werribee and Bacchus Marsh Irrigation Districts, groundwater systems throughout southern Victoria, and river and creek systems in southern Victoria other than those controlled by Melbourne Water.

It is important to note that SRW does not act as a water broker in the process. We cannot advise people on the price of water, or match them individually with a buyer or seller. Buyers and sellers still need to go through our normal application process.

The Watermatch website also has links to local trading rules, sample contracts and trading application forms.

Local Water Reports

Subscribe now to receive your copy

Our annual Local Water Reports, which recap the previous season for each basin, will be available in October 2017 as an e-newsletter and also can be downloaded from our website www.srw.com.au

The new format helps us to reduce operating costs, and can also allow us to add other types of more interactive content into the reports.

Please register your email address in the subscriptions section on our website to receive your Local Water Report, as well as any of our other publications, direct to your email inbox. If you do not have an email address, you can phone our Customer Service team, who can explain how to download one from our website.



Groundwater and Rivers forum members

In each edition of Diversions, you'll meet two members of the Forum:

Tom Wallace - Tom's farm business experience includes dairying, sheep farming and beef farming. Tom's 50 years of experience in the farming business ensures he has a fundamental understanding of water management and use in the MID.

"I joined the Forum because I believe I have something to contribute to the group and to represent our local farmers," he said.

Tom has a vast amount of public service experience. He served as Member for Gippsland South in the Victorian Legislative Assembly for eleven years, was a Commissioner with Baw Baw Shire during the amalgamation of councils for three years and is a former Board member of Gippsland Water.

Tom is also an active member of the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Kilmany Pearsondale Landcare Group.

"I am a great believer in SRW, they listen to people. They provide worthwhile advantages to our farming community and I'm proud to be part of that."

Liz Clay - Liz is a fourth generation market gardener. Her farm at Noojee has been certified organic for 25 years producing a range of vegetables, berries and beef for local markets. She is a strong advocate for sustainable agriculture and has been actively involved in the development of the organic sector at local, national and international levels.

"I joined the forum because I thought it would be useful for the group to get a perspective from small farming situations, particularly from the upper Latrobe area, where there is a movement for small farm enterprises," she said.

"I particularly love the sensibilities and interactions with different farmers around the table. The creative thought and wisdom that is shared provides a valuable contribution to the work of the Board and the organisation."

Liz has extensive board experience including serving three terms on the world board of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, chair of the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Chair of Gippsland Climate Change Network and has held numerous executive positions on industry and community committees.

Her focus more recently is in exploring ways to connect people back to farmers and places where their food is grown through innovative ways of marketing and developing local, sustainable food systems - growing, aggregating and distributing local food for local people.

"Being part of the Forum has given me an appreciation of how client focussed SRW is, and the importance of having that experience around the table."

Customer survey – coming soon

Plans are underway to conduct our biennial customer survey, which will be quick a phone interview Customers are chosen at random to participate in the process. We will be looking for your feedback on how we're doing and what we could be doing better. All responses collected will remain confidential.

Don't drink the water

Any water from sources managed or licensed by Southern Rural Water, including irrigation storages, channels, rivers and creeks, groundwater and farm dams, is untreated. It should not be considered safe for human consumption without proper treatment.

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