

Welcome to our spring edition of Southern Rural Water's newsletter for customers in the Macalister Irrigation Area.

Recap last season

Last season turned out to be very interesting; we had a dryish spring with very little spill entitlement available which is unusual for Macalister. We were able to use our new rules for usage of our Thomson Dam entitlements by borrowing the drought reserve and declare 100% allocation on 27 July, which was well received.

We had a pretty dry December with warm temperatures, and then there was some heavy rain during January which created useful inflows to Lake Glenmaggie. The inflows allowed us to pay back the borrowed Thomson entitlement pretty early. We were then able to use further inflows to allocate against low reliability shares and this was a significant boost for the district.

We finished on 100% high reliability and 20% low reliability, which is pretty normal for this district. Spare a thought for other irrigation areas in Victoria which had much less than this – Werribee had only 15% and 5 out of 6 areas in Goulburn Murray Water's region were under 100% for the season. We certainly have a very reliable water supply here in "Australia's premier irrigation district!"



Field Officer Russell White at a new modernised regulator



Lake Glenmaggie releasing excess flows in July

16-17 season opening allocation

Good rains in June boosted inflows into Glenmaggie and we were able to announce an opening allocation on 1 July 2016 of 70% High Reliability Water Shares (HRWS). Further rainfall allowed us to make a further allocation increase to 100% HRWS on 19 July.

Even more rainfall in the upper catchment filled Glenmaggie to ~175,000ML and we have followed our release strategy to bring the storage back to a manageable level and plan to have it at full supply in early October, whilst keeping an eye on rainfall forecasts and inflows which seems to be our annual balancing act!

Our share of the Thomson also received welcome inflows and despite the 3,000ML traded over to Werribee on 1 July, our capacity share is almost full.

Water trading

Last season's dry conditions and limited spill entitlement availability really tested customers' water budgets and allocation trades were on the up through the November-December period.

We also carried out four online allocation auctions on our "Waterbid" site (which is modelled on eBay) at a no reserve price. All up we sold 1170ML for an average price of \$150.30/ML.

Funds from these auctions will be put into modernisation projects in the Macalister Irrigation District (MID). We plan to complete further online allocation auctions this year. If you want to be involved, please register on "Waterbid" (follow the links from our website)

Lifeblood

Lifeblood is a program to achieve unsurpassed performance in the Macalister Irrigation District channel network. Just like the circulation system of the human body, we believe the channel network of the MID is the lifeblood of the irrigation community!

This exciting program is going back to the basics of what makes a genuinely great water delivery experience for a customer in the MID. To enable our vision of "great service," we have to have a channel system that is optimized and as efficient as it can be.



We are investing heavily in automated and modern equipment, and now Lifeblood is ensuring we do not leave the channel network behind. The Lifeblood program is looking at anything in the system that will impact on delivery to your outlet – whether it's a weed bed, silt mound, debris or other restriction, we want to find it and fix it! You will notice a lot more excavators and backhoes than normal performing these fix it jobs around the MID than in the past.

We have already fixed many issues through Lifeblood and we won't stop until they are all complete. Lifeblood supports our philosophy of "If our customers are successful, and we have contributed to that success, then we are being successful".

Do you know of a channel restriction that impacts your service? Let us know and we'll add it to our list!



Main Southern Channel post Lifeblood work

Save the date!

The 2017 Gippsland Irrigation Expo will be held on 15 March 2017 at the Sale Showgrounds – stay tuned for more information.

Water to Werribee

The Werribee system has had poor inflows for the past few years, and with around 5% of average river flows for most of last season, the storages were almost empty. Our Werribee and Bacchus Marsh customers had only a 15% allocation last season and were likely to have a 0% opening allocation come 1 July.

In an effort to help provide some surety for our Werribee customers expressions of interest were sought in late June from Macalister customers, who had remaining 2015-16 allocation to sell some or all of that water.

This proposal for SRW to purchase 3,000ML of unused allocation was supported by the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee (MCCC) as it was seen as an opportunity to assist the Werribee and Bacchus Marsh customers and provide a source of revenue for the Macalister customers. The price of \$85/ML reflected the re-bundled price of water in the 2015-16 season.

In a very tight time frame through June, we received offers totalling 10,350ML. We were able to use 30% of this and payments were either credited to usage bills or paid into a bank account. All transfers were completed in the last couple of days of the financial year. An excellent win/win result for the MID and our western customers!

Environmental water notifications

Environmental water entitlements are held in the Thomson Reservoir and Lake Glenmaggie and are managed by West Gippsland Catchment Authority (WGCMA).

These entitlements provide the water required to sustain the plants, animals and habitats in the Thomson and Macalister rivers. These rivers have received environmental watering since 2010, and you may have previously received notifications of these releases via mail or email from SRW on behalf of the WGCMA.

SRW is no longer going to provide the notifications, so if you wish to continue receiving environmental water notifications please follow the instructions below:

1. Visit www.wgcma.vic.gov.au/our-region/waterways/current-environmental-water-releases
2. Fill out the contact form on the page
3. If you would like to receive immediate notification ensure that the email and/or sms (text message) details are provided.
4. If you would like to receive notification via mail, please fill out the postal address details.

Alternatively, you can contact the WGCMA on **1300 094 262** to provide your details over the phone.

Upcoming environmental flow releases will also be communicated on the WGCMA website (www.wgcma.vic.gov.au) and in your local paper (Gippsland Times and Latrobe Valley Express).

Changes to your MCCC

We recently held a recruitment process for the MCCC.

SRW would like to thank departing long time member Tom Wallace for his many years of service to the committee. Tom continues to serve on our Groundwater and Rivers Forum.

We welcome Jason Scicluna to the committee. Jason is a qualified diesel mechanic and runs a 300 acre dairy farm near Sale. He is also Captain of the Stratford Fire Brigade.

Member's Name	Area	Contact No.
Iain Stewart, Chairperson	Maffra	0429 471 341
Brad Missen, Deputy Chairperson	Denison	0438 450 300
Graeme Anderson, OAM	Denison	0407 347 174
Jeannette Howie	Denison	0429 486 312
Jim Forsyth	Nuntin	0428 300 113
David Read	Stratford	0414 743 209
Jason Scicluna	Montgomery	0427 458 271
Malcolm Sellen	Nambrok	0414 988 946
Steve Dwyer	Newry	0407 570 469
Alan Clyne	Tinamba West	0407 544 761
Norm Drew	Heyfield	0427 482 553
Raelene Hanratty	Upper Maffra	0407 842 740

MID2030 Update

The MID2030 Project is continuing and MID2030 Phase 1A is on schedule to be completed by June 2017.

The project will facilitate an increase in the amount of food produced in the region, and boost the local and state economy. The initial phases are estimated to make available over 12,000 ML of water in an average year for customers to use. At the end of July 2016, \$24 million worth of works from the \$32 million project was complete.

Southern-Tinamba pipeline project

The Southern-Tinamba Supply Zone includes the Tinamba, Riverslea and Mewburn Park areas. This project replaces the upper channel system with a gravity pipeline, and automates and modernises the lower channel system. About 37 km of pipeline will be installed, and 32 km of existing channels upgraded and automated.

In April 2016 the State Government announced that it would contribute \$20M towards the \$60M project in Southern Tinamba. Together with a similar contribution from irrigators, our customers now have two-thirds funding for the project. Works will start in 2017. The water saving target for the project is 9,700 ML.

Detailed planning for the project has started, and we will continue to engage with the Federal government to seek matching funding to fully fund the project. Importantly, the SRW contribution (your contribution) is being accomplished without significant price rises. This was a key factor in the Macalister Customer Consultative Committee endorsing the proposal.

These works will transform the Tinamba Riverslea area and bring significant regional benefits. There is also room to complete some of the leftover manual channel networks in other areas, too. We'll keep you up to date with how these are progressing as they happen. All of the water saved through these projects goes back to the customers of the MID, through water share auctions, shelf price sales or direct distribution.

Southern-Cowwarr Balancing Storage



Sunset over our new balancing storage at Denison

The 180ML Southern-Cowwarr Balancing Storage is located at the start of the Nambrok-Denison zone and is an off-stream storage that forms an integral final link in automating the Southern Main Channel from Lake Glenmaggie to Nambrok Denison.

The balancing storage is now complete, and further works to allow the storage to operate automatically with the modernised channel system should be completed this season.

Other works

Other MID 2030 projects include upgrading measurement and control gates at MID storages, concept designs for future modernisation of the Newry channel system and improvements to measurement at the Maffra Weir and Eastern channel systems.

Irrigation farm planning funding - now available all year

Funding is now available for irrigation farm plans in the Macalister irrigation Area. If you are thinking about upgrading your on-farm irrigation system in the future, now is a great time to begin. Funding for farm plan updates is also available for plans over 10 years old or where changes to the SRW supply system have opened up new opportunities for improvements on farm.

Funding is available for up to 75% of the cost of the plan.

For further information, contact the irrigation team at Agriculture Victoria Maffra on **03 5147 0800** or **sarah.m.killury@ecodev.vic.gov.au**.

Do you have an email address?

In order to reduce costs and minimise our carbon footprint, we would like to start sending newsletters and other information by email. If you have an email address, please email Customer Relations Project Officer, Pam Crawford, at **pamelac@srw.com.au** so we can add you to our email list.

Contact us for more information or to provide feedback

We will continue to provide you with the best information we can on the seasonal outlook and how we are managing the available water. As the season progresses, we will provide regular updates which may help you to plan your farming activities.

We are always looking for ways to improve our customer service. If you would like more information on any of the above topics, or you have any concerns, please contact one of our staff listed below.

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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