

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

Help for customers in distress

Following the drop of farm gate milk returns in May, Southern Rural Water is acutely aware that many of our customers may be in financial or emotional distress.

Southern Rural Water already operates a hardship policy, where we work with customers experiencing hardship to formalise an individual payment plan. Many of our customers use this option from time to time and we are more than happy to create an arrangement that will suit. Options can include weekly, fortnightly or monthly payments - contact our customer service team to create a payment plan.

However, we've asked our customer consultative committees for their opinion on further steps we could take.

Repayment extension

The option that our committees recommended, and that we are now offering, is a repayment extension.

The extension means that:

- customers in any area with existing overdue debt can apply to us to defer payment until 20 October, with a lower interest rate applied
- Customers in the MID will receive their water usage estimate in June 2016 so they have the option of paying in the 2015-16 financial year if they wish to do so, however the due date of the bill (sent in July) will be 20 October 2016 - two months later than usual

These measures mean we can offer a repayment extension for any customer experiencing financial hardship, giving them some breathing space to rearrange their affairs and reset their business model.

In order to take up the repayment extension, customers must contact SRW to organise a repayment plan.

The dry conditions have impacted many areas and are still impacting some parts of southern Victoria and some vegetable growers are also facing uncertainty due to a large supplier going into receivership. If challenging times are causing financial hardship and you are finding it difficult to pay your water bill please contact SRW to discuss payment options.

Water difficulties

As normal, we urge any customers facing trouble with water supply to contact our field staff sooner rather than later, and we will do our best to work through available options with you such as trade.

We also remind customers that trading water (either temporarily or permanently) may be another source of income you might not have considered.

Free advertising for water to trade is available via Southern Rural Water's trading website, Watermatch (via srw.com.au), or drop into one of our customer offices and our staff can help.

More information

For more information about individual payment plans, the repayment extension or water trading, please contact us on **1300 139 510** or visit srw.com.au.

Waterline – an online water management centre

Waterline is our online water management centre for customers.

Through Waterline you can:

- enter meter readings
- access water usage details
- print your water usage statement
- place orders (regulated rivers).

Although we read your meter(s) twice a year, we encourage you to monitor your own usage to make sure you remain within your licensed volume.

Water Usage Statements provide up-to-date information about your current available entitlements and usage.

By checking your Water Usage Statement against your entitlements, you will get a snapshot of your actual usage from the date your last meter read was entered.

These reports can help you:

- monitor water use
- compare usage against previous seasons
- evaluate on-farm practices or changes.

We recently received some excellent feedback from one of our larger customers, Sibelco, about their experience using Waterline.

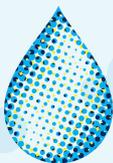
“Sibelco Lang Lang had struggled for a number of years to track and measure its site water usage from the bores on site. Recently, while discussing with Southern Rural Water the site’s current water usage for the financial year, it was suggested that we use the online water calculation system that Southern Rural Water provides to its clients,” Raymond Bros, Safety and Environment Coordinator said.

“This online system has provided Sibelco Lang Lang an exact daily/weekly/monthly/annual water usage amount whereby we can track and measure our consumption and ensure our water usage will be cost and sustainably effective for years to come.

“Since being shown this system I certainly find it very effective and detailed enough for us to track our water consumption; we really appreciate the feedback and assistance in helping us find a more suitable system for our water management.”

Waterline can be accessed online by visiting www.srw.com.au/worder or you can use the link on SRW’s home page.

Doing great things with rural water?



2016 Rural Water Awards

Entries are now open for the 2016 Rural Water Awards, designed to recognise and reward Victorian rural water licence holders who are doing great things with water.

The awards are offered through water corporations across the state that manage rural water, including (Coliban Water, Goulburn-Murray Water, GWMWater, Lower Murray Water and Southern Rural Water), in partnership with VicWater, Victorian Farmers Federation and the Victorian state government’s Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The awards aim to recognise licence holders who have used new or innovative water technology, introduced projects to bring about water savings, or increased their productivity through changed water practices.

Awards are available in four categories: for irrigation district water users (drawing water from a rural supply system such as channels or pipelines), groundwater

users (bores), surface water users (diverting water from a waterway or dam) and community and education groups that draw water from any of the above water sources.

Regional winners will receive \$500, and statewide winners receive \$2000 with runners-up receiving \$500.

“This is a great chance for the rural sector to show off its outstanding abilities in managing water sustainably,” said Chair of the Victorian Farmers Federation Water Committee, Richard Anderson.

“Entrants should not forget the power that awards can bring to their business, often opening up new opportunities for both business and funding.

For many, it is also a chance to educate communities that being waterwise has been a way of life for generations, not just recent times.”

Entries for the awards close on Wednesday 31 August 2016. Entry information is available online at: www.vicwater.org.au/events-awards/rural-water-awards.

Introducing our new website

A visit to www.srw.com.au will now reveal a very different picture, with a newly launched website for Southern Rural Water.

The site has a cleaner, more attractive design and will be much easier to use.

"We are excited about our new website and the level of detail it provides for customers and other users," said Alison Barry, Project Manager, Southern Rural Water.

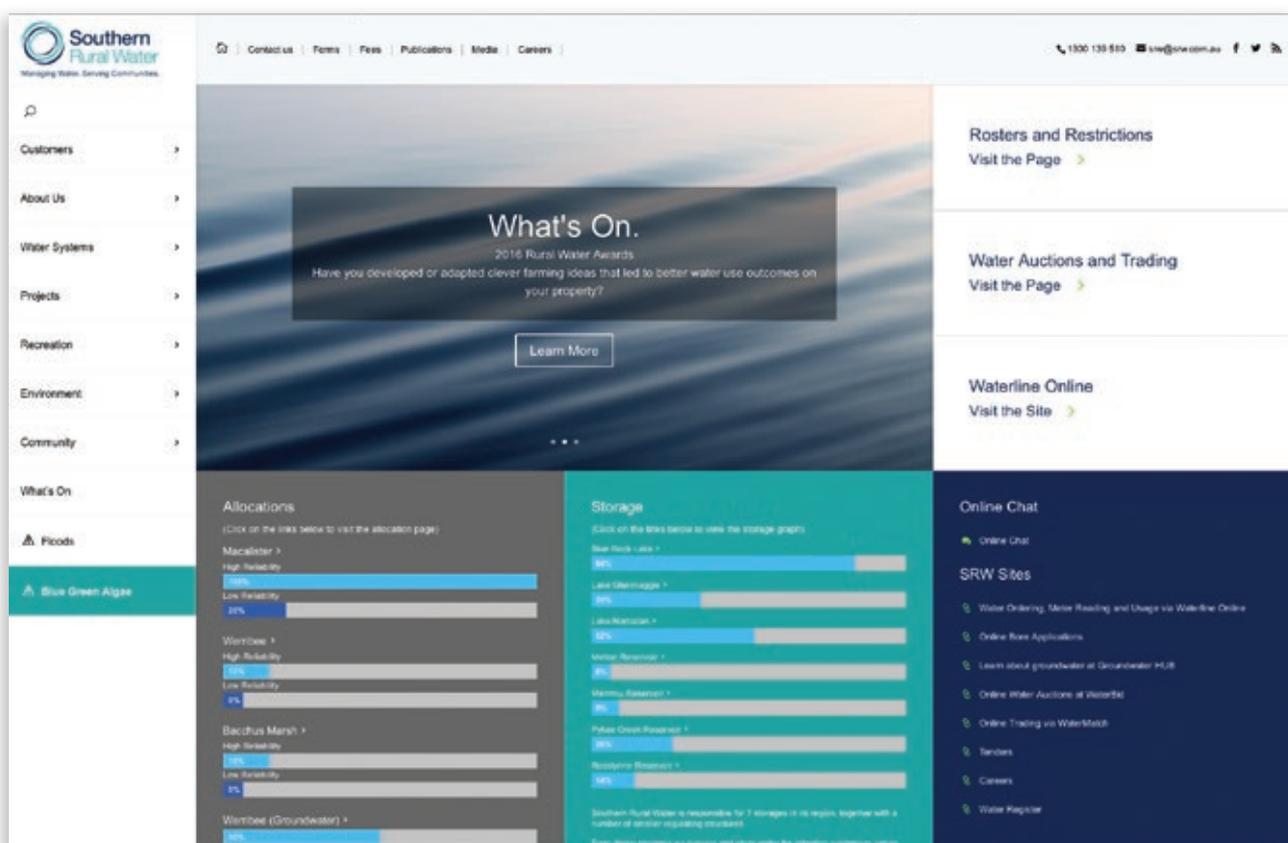
"The website has a lot of great new features, but most of all, we wanted make life easier for our customers."

If you take a look around the site we think you'll get a pretty good idea of who we are, what we do and more importantly how we can help you and your business or organisation".

Along with a fresh and simplified look, the site will be compatible with your mobile devices, allowing you to better interact with Southern Rural Water online.

Visit our website for our latest news and updates. We encouraged you to explore the website and sign up to receive newsletters and media releases by email.

We hope you will enjoy our new site. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please send them to srw@srw.com.au or phone **1300 139 510**.



Taggle – a new way to read meters

Our Groundwater and Rivers business, is introducing new technology to read meters for our groundwater and river customers.

The system, known "Taggle", is a low cost, low power transmitting device that is attached to existing water meters. It allows hourly data to be sent digitally via radio technology to high-sensitivity receivers.

For customers, the ability to access daily and hourly usage data can help with on-farm management and allow important decisions about water management to be made quickly and easily.

For Southern Rural Water, the data can be viewed online and quickly and easily imported directly into our metering system.

Taggle removes the need for our field staff to physically read meters. This will substantially improve productivity and reduce safety risks to staff, whilst also allowing our field team to focus on tasks that add more value for customers.

Southern Rural Water has completed a pilot project using the technology in the Warrion Water Supply Protection Area (WSPA), giving us confidence the system works effectively. Daily meter reading and usage data is now available for this area at the click of a button.

The technology will be introduced in the Deutgam (Werribee South) WSPA over the next few months. Meters in this area have traditionally been read more frequently than other areas due to the high level of groundwater monitoring.

The project will be rolled out to other areas across southern Victoria in a staged approach.

Southern Groundwater & Rivers Forum

The Southern Groundwater and Rivers Forum is an advisory committee of the Southern Rural Water Board.

It meets several times a year and provides:

- an influential forum to help shape water policy
- high-level input into plans for our Groundwater and Rivers business
- a strong communication link between Southern Rural Water and our customers.

Members

Members of the forum include:

- Ross Ingram (vegetables, Bairnsdale) – Chair
- Peter Delahunty (dairy and lucerne, Warrion)
- Matt Gleeson (dairy, Morwell)
- Damian Moore (dairy and beef, Yarram)
- Pat Toohey (beef and cereal, Springbank)
- Tom Wallace (dairy, Kilmany)
- Liz Clay (organic horticulturalist, Noojee)
- David Hotchkin (potato and sheep, Thorpdale)
- Bruce Vallance (dairy, Nirranda)

In this edition, we'll introduce you to two members of the Forum.

You can find additional information about the forum on our website.

Ross Ingram - Chair. Ross is a vegetable, cereal and cattle producer on the Mitchell River flats near Bairnsdale. Ross has a keen interest in all types of farming, logistics and food service. He is also a Board member of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Pat Toohey. Pat has been farming for 35 years. He currently runs beef cattle and sheep, and grows potatoes and crops on his farm at Springbank. He is married with four children who are also involved in farming. Pat has been on the Moorabool Shire Council for 12 years and has been Mayor twice. He is also Chair of the regional Agricultural Council and has been a member of this forum since its formation in 2002.

In brief

Follow us on Facebook



Have you liked us on Facebook yet? If not, do so now to get all the latest updates and news. Just search Southern Rural Water to find us.

Changes to your meter and supply

If you are planning a change to your water supply or you are moving your meter, we are here to provide guidance.

It's important that before you make any changes to the location of your water meter that you seek our guidance on the manufacturing specifications. Any incorrect installation may lead to expensive reinstatement later.

If your meter is not working or needs repairs, please contact us on **1300 139 510**.

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.

Photography - www.buxtonography.com

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