

# DIVERSIONS

Spring 2021

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## Welcome Bryce Morden

I recently joined Southern Rural Water as the new Manager Groundwater & Rivers.

I was previously the Senior Manager of the Water Resources Team at the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, where I played a key role in leading several functions such as water resource planning, sustainable irrigation development, oversight of statutory obligations, (including referrals from SRW), and the implementation of instream environmental works through active community engagement to deliver key outcomes.

Prior to working at GHCMA, I worked across many of the rivers and groundwater systems of southern Victoria, including time with Corangamite CMA and West Gippsland CMA where I was involved in the development of Irrigation Development Guidelines and the unbundling of water entitlements for the Macalister Irrigation District.

Outside of work I enjoy serving my community. I have been a captain and long-standing member of the Timboon CFA Brigade after joining CFA at the Maffra CFA Brigade. I've been a member of the board of the Timboon and District Healthcare Service since 2016 working to maintain important services in a small rural community.

I will be based out of the Warrnambool Office but look forward to travelling around the region when restrictions allow, and I look forward to meeting you.



**Please note: Our customer newsletters are only available online**, under the Publications tab on our website. We are sending newsletters by email instead of printed copies by post to enable more frequent updates in a cost-effective way. If you wish to receive customer updates and a link to our newsletters, please sign up on our website: <http://www.srw.com.au/newsletter-signup/> If you do not have online access, you may pick up a copy at our offices.

## Season update

The current season is building off the back of wetter conditions through 2020-21 to maintain a positive climate outlook for groundwater and rivers customers. Most regions started the rainfall season with good soil moisture, healthy on-farm storage levels and replenished aquifers providing hope for the upcoming irrigation season and the multi-year outlook.

Wetter than average conditions have contributed to multiple flood events right across the SRW region. It seems that the Gippsland region has been rolling from one flood event to the next with very limited opportunity to clean up between them. For licence holders with flood or storm affected infrastructure, it will be important to ensure that pumps and irrigation equipment are ready to go when you need it as the season progresses.

From a productivity perspective for irrigators, it will be important to monitor soil moisture to make sure you don't miss the important first irrigation of the season.

Please let the SRW team know if there are things we can do around your season start-up, whether it is tidying up loose ends from last year or planning ahead for the coming season.

## Reflections 2020-21

Widespread rainfall early in the 2020-21 season across southern Victoria underpinned a successful year for our groundwater and river-based customers. Across SRW rivers, streamflow remained at relatively high levels throughout the summer. Some rivers in the western region, such as the Barwon River, did not go on *total ban* for the first time in 20 years.

Improved climate conditions and reduced restrictions resulted in a low level of reactive compliance for breaches of licence conditions and a reduction in unauthorised take.

An increase in surface water availability and reduced crop irrigation demand across the season resulted in less late season trading in most systems.

In the South West Limestone aquifer, reduced use in season 2020-21 will provide many irrigators the ability to utilise groundwater carry-over of up to 30% of entitlement in 2021-22.

The relatively wet start to the season led to reduced trades during the peak irrigation season but buoyant dairy milk, red meat, and farm produce prices, has added to confidence and resulted in an overall slight increase in trades across the full year.

The continued presence of our field staff with customers, has led to trade application numbers reaching 4,856 in 2020-21, up 6% on 2019-20.

Measure	Target (2019-20 result)	Actual 2020-21
Applications processed within target timeframes	90% (88%)	94%
Number of applications	N/A (4,536)	4,856
Customer contacts to promote water trades	1,000 (1,015)	657

Technology continues to provide customers with better and more timely information for their management decisions. Progress has been made in these key areas:

- the continued rollout of Automated Meter Reading (AMR). A total of 2003 AMR or 'Taggle' meter reading devices have been installed. This equals 42.4% of the project target.
- AMR data has been integrated with water usage databases, allowing commencement of the rollout of the mySRW portal to groundwater and rivers customers during 2021-22.

Better quality and more timely data helps us all work to make the most of available allocations while reducing the compliance and enforcement burden of accidental unauthorised take (overuse).



## mySRW - customer portal update

SRW launched our customer portal **mySRW**, last year to make it easier for customers to access their information and services.

**mySRW** will help to simplify transactions and processes by providing the services, information, and support through one central logon. This makes it easier to view, understand and manage your water entitlements.

mySRW is progressively being rolled out to our ground water and rivers customers, and a pilot group is currently testing the portal.

My Account ▾ My Entitlements ▾ Forms and Resources ▾

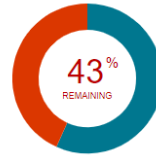
### My Usage

Your usage information is made up of current usage, meter readings, trades and/or recycled water.

*This information is current within 24 hours, future orders are not included.*

### My water allocation

ABA001111 ▾



MY ALLOCATION

471.4 ML

DISTRICT ALLOCATION

100.0 %

MANAGE WATER

Trade Water [↗](#)

WHAT I HAVE USED

267.7 ML

WHAT I HAVE LEFT

203.7 ML

Order Water [↗](#)

If you would like to know more, you can visit our website or [mySRW.com.au](http://mySRW.com.au) and there is a short video to show how it works

## Vale Gary Wills

It is with a heavy heart that we advise that Gary Wills passed away recently following a stroke.

Gary had worked for Southern Rural Water and its predecessors since 1973, giving nearly 50 years of service, supporting groundwater and rivers customers in western Victoria.



During this time Gary was not only committed to the organisation, but more importantly he was committed to getting the best outcomes for his customers throughout his career, with a depth of knowledge of the region that only time and experience can bring.

He will be sadly missed by the team in Western Victoria, the Groundwater and Rivers group and Southern Rural Water as a whole, as well as our customers, many of whom he counted as friends.

Our thoughts are with his wife Maree, his children Dale, Mitchell, and Elise, and their extended families.

Thank you, Gary, for your service and commitment to our customers in the south west, and your great contribution to SRW.

## We're here to help

We know that some customers may be experiencing financial difficulty because of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions and we have several ways to help support you.

If you need more time to pay your bill, would like to discuss a payment plan or you are experiencing financial hardship due to other circumstances, such as storms, floods, or bushfires, please contact us so that we can make a payment arrangement that helps you.

You can call our Customer Service team on 1300 139 510 and select option 3 to discuss your circumstances or any queries about your bill. Our staff are also available on live webchat Mon-Fri 8.30am to 4.15pm.

You may be eligible for payment relief from us, for instance, if you qualified for some of the Federal Government's assistance programs. This can apply even if you have no employees. See [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au) for more detail. You can also find links to a range of confidential financial counselling services and Government support on <http://www.srw.com.au/coronavirus/>.

Our office reception areas remain closed due to COVID 19 restrictions in Victoria. Updates are available on our website <http://www.srw.com.au/about-us/contact-us/>

We continue to provide our services with operations and field staff working within physical distancing rules.

Our Customer Service team can connect you to our staff including those working remotely. We can also set up a video meeting for you. Account payments can still be made over the phone, or through BPay, PostBillpay online, or at any Australia Post office. If you are unable to use online systems to pay your bill, please call Customer Service team for other options.

## Automated metering rollout update

Earlier this year, Taggle Systems successfully bid to continue the partnership with SRW in supplying the network and telemetry devices for the third stage of our automated meter reading project.

This stage will see around 1,750 devices installed in the far west, Ballarat, Mornington Peninsula and across parts of the Latrobe Valley. While it has been challenging to continue with installations during Covid 19 restrictions, we have made solid progress with increasing our network and improving our processes.

We are currently working on the integration of our automated meter readings into mySRW – the customer portal, so that up-to-date readings are available at any time.

When complete, the program will automate the meter reading of around 90% of all surface water and groundwater meters across our region.



*Pictured above: SRW crew signal testing in Port Albert, South Gippsland*

## Have your say - join our Southern Groundwater & Rivers Forum

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

It meets four times a year and provides an influential forum to help shape water policy, give input into plans for our Groundwater and Rivers operations and is a valued channel for communications between SRW and our customers.

2021 Forum members include:

- **Ross Ingram**, Chair (vegetable production, Bairnsdale)
- **Josie Zilm**, Deputy Chair (beef farm, Pearsondale)
- **Liz Clay** (organic horticulturalist, Piedmont)
- **Norm Drew** (dairy, Heyfield)
- **Matt Gleeson** (dairy, Boolarra)
- **Daniel Hammond** (horticulture/ vegetable production, Wy Yung)
- **Steven Marshall** (horticulture production & contracting, Shoreham)
- **Damian Moore** (dairy & beef, Yarram)
- **Kevin Stark** (sheep, cattle, cropping & horticulture, Lake Mundi)
- **Daniel Toohey** (beef & cereal, Springbank)
- **Bruce Vallance** (dairy, Nirranda)
- **Tom Wallace** (dairy, Kilmany)



A few words from the Chair of the SGRF, Ross Ingram:

*I've been a member of the Forum for almost 20 years, and Chair for the last three.*

*I have really enjoyed my time on the Forum, as I'm passionate about all things agriculture, as well as all things water.*

*It's provided a great opportunity to share knowledge and experience across a broad range of areas, with other farmers and SRW customers around Victoria.*

*I've been able to share my experiences as a grower and business operator, and I've learned a great deal from others about their operations.*

*I've also enjoyed my interactions with SRW staff and management and know much more about the water sector than when I joined the Forum back in 2002.*

*If you're passionate about water, about your farm/agribusiness, and you would like to make a contribution, I would encourage you to consider joining the forum.*

For further information about the SGRF, please contact Hayley Taylor on 5139 3100 or 1300 139 510, or email [HayleyT@srw.com.au](mailto:HayleyT@srw.com.au)

## Share your story

Are you running a successful and productive farming business? Have you developed innovative practices, particularly in your use of water? Do you have a story to share about how water use has changed over the years and what you've learned from it on your property?

We'd love to hear from you, and you could feature in a future Diversions newsletter, or be eligible for entry into agriculture awards. Please email [communications@srw.com.au](mailto:communications@srw.com.au) or call the Communications and Engagement team on 1300 139 510.

## Looking to trade water?

We encourage any licence holders with unused water to consider temporarily leasing or selling water to other producers who need it.

Temporarily trading water through a lease arrangement is allowed for periods of up to 5 years, it can offset your licence fees and potentially give you a return on your asset.

If you would like more information on trading water, you can call one of our field officers or visit our website: <http://www.srw.com.au/customers/water-trading-leasing/>



Phone  
Email  
Website

1300 139 510  
[srw@srw.com.au](mailto:srw@srw.com.au)  
[www.srw.com.au](http://www.srw.com.au)



88 Johnson Street  
Maffra 3860

1 Tower Road  
Werribee 3030

132 Fairy Street  
Warrnambool 3280