

Orbost Groundwater Management Area Local Management Plan

Version 1

April 2023

Version Control

Version	Change summary	Date
1	Removed from previous Catchment Statement and presented as a standalone Local Management Plan for Orbost GMA. Minor administrative updates included.	April 2023

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Purpose of this document

This Local Management Plan documents the current management arrangements for the Orbost groundwater management area (GMA). The objective of the plan is to ensure the equitable sharing and long-term sustainability of the groundwater resource.

The plan aims to clearly and simply explain how groundwater is managed in this area, this includes information on the boundaries and depth of the management area, the cap on total annual groundwater licensed volume, how groundwater licences can be accessed (via a trade of entitlement), and the metering requirements.

The Local Management Plan will be reviewed on an as needs basis. The aim of future reviews will be to improve existing management and where possible to make management less complex, while ensuring equitable sharing and long-term sustainability of the resource.



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General Manager Service Delivery

12 April 2023

Orbost GMA Local Management Plan

Objective of the Local Management Plan

The objective of the Local Management Plan is to make sure that the groundwater resources in the Orbost Groundwater Management Area (GMA) are managed in an equitable and sustainable manner.

Area description

Orbost GMA is shown below. The plan is lodged with the Central Plan Office, reference number LEGL./04-154.

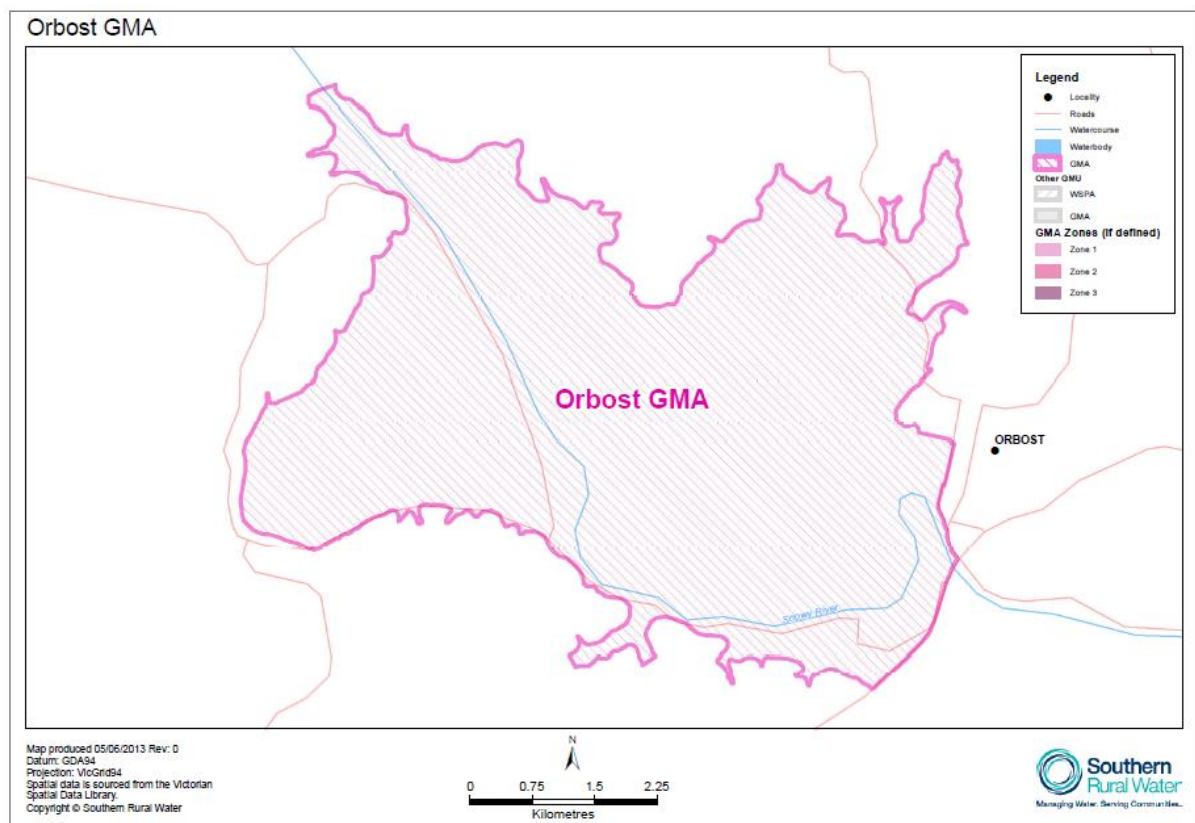


Figure 1: Map of Orbost Groundwater Management Area.

Permissible Consumptive Volume

A Permissible Consumptive Volume (PCV) currently applies to the Orbost GMA. The PCV is a cap on the amount of groundwater allocated in this management unit. The PCV for Orbost GMA is 1,217 ML/yr.

The PCV applies to the area covered in Figure 1, for all formations from 20 to 45m below the surface.

Water entitlements

The extraction of groundwater for purposes other than domestic and stock use is authorised under a groundwater licence. There are 4 groundwater licences in the Orbost GMA that

authorise a total of 1,217 ML¹. People have rights to take groundwater for domestic and stock use without a groundwater licence.

Over 90% of groundwater used in the Orbost GMA is for irrigation purposes, with one licensed for dairy cooling and wash-down. Metered groundwater use is less than the total groundwater entitlements and varies each year according to the seasonal conditions.

Licence holders must not take more than their annual licence volumes.

Restrictions

The PCV determines the maximum volume of water that can be extracted from the Orbost GMA; however, the Local Management Plan does not place specific restrictions on taking groundwater.

If necessary, SRW is able to temporarily qualify rights to groundwater under section 33AAA of the *Water Act 1989* if a water shortage occurs - for example, if regional drawdown is affecting access to groundwater by users.

Groundwater licences also allow SRW to restrict extraction if required - for example, to minimise the effect of extraction from specific sites if there is a significant impact on nearby users or the aquifer. If restrictions are necessary, SRW will notify licence holders in advance.

Trading

In considering an application to transfer a licence temporarily or permanently, SRW must thoroughly assess the application. An application to transfer a licence is not automatically approved. In deciding whether or not to approve an application, SRW must consider section 40 of the Act, including:

- Availability of water now and in the future;
- Adverse effects that an approval may have on existing users, on waterways and aquifers and on the environment; and
- Existing and projected water quality in the GMA.

When an application is made, SRW will assess whether groundwater extractions at the new site will cause adverse and material interference to any nearby groundwater user. If interference is likely, SRW may set transfer conditions to minimise interference, or it may refuse the application. Approval of an application to transfer may be subject to technical assessments to determine bore interference and impact on surface water bodies.

In the Orbost GMA:

- Permanent transfers are permitted
- Temporary transfers are permitted for a period of up to five years

¹ As of July 2020

New licences

New licences can be issued up to the PCV and in accordance with policies for managing take and use licences. The availability of any unallocated entitlement will be determined in accordance with State Policy on unallocated water.

Metering

Southern Rural Water meters new and existing groundwater users with an annual volume greater than 20ML². This allows SRW to keep track of how much water is being used and enables licence holders to keep within their allocated volume.

The meters are supplied by SRW, and the licence holder is responsible for paying the full cost of the meter and initial installation. The meter remains the property of SRW and SRW is responsible for maintenance and replacement.

Meters are read at least twice per year.

Consultation

SRW will consult with licence holders and relevant stakeholders before making changes to the Local Management Plan, other than administrative changes or clarifications.

The Local Management Plan will be reviewed on an as needs basis.

² Except where metering is physically impractical, or where it is high risk from a health and safety perspective