



Hopkins River Basin Local Management Plan

December 2025

Version	Description	Date	Author
1	Hopkins River Basin	March 2014	SRW
1(A)	Merri River LMP	October 2016	SRW
2	Merri River LMP incorporated into the Hopkins River Basin LMP, other changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restriction tables updated to be consistent with written description.• 5-day averages removed from the Merri River restrictions• Background information reduced.	December 2025	SRW

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Hopkins River Basin

Introduction

Southern Rural Water (SRW) is the water corporation responsible for administering and enforcing the Hopkins River Basin Local Management Plan (LMP).

The purpose of the Hopkins River Basin LMP is to:

- Document the management objectives for the system;
- Explain to licence holders (and the broader community) the specific management objectives and arrangements for their water resource and the rules that apply to them as users of that resource;
- Clarify water sharing arrangements for all users and the environment, including environmental flow requirements; and
- Document any limits, including water use caps, permissible consumptive volumes or extraction limits that apply to the system.

Management objectives

The objective of the LMP is to ensure the equitable sharing of water between users and the environment and the long-term sustainability of the resource.

Water system covered

The LMP covers all the rivers and creeks located within the Hopkins River Basin, which includes:

Hopkins River	Merri River
Hopkins River and tributaries	Merri River and tributaries
Brucknell (Cudgee) Creek and tributaries	Drysdale Creek and tributaries
Mount Emu Creek and tributaries	Spring Creek and tributaries

Catchment information

The Hopkins Basin (Basin 36) in Victoria's Southwest covers an area of 10,096 km² (4.4 % of the state). It is bounded in the north by the Great Dividing Range, in the north-west by the Grampians Ranges and in the south by the Southern Ocean; entering the sea at Warrnambool. The basin is flat to undulating with numerous volcanic cones. The major tributaries of the Hopkins River are Salt Creek, Mount Emu Creek, Muston Creek and Brucknell Creek.

The Merri River is the only other significant coastal stream within the Hopkins Basin and drains the Southwestern corner, also discharging to the sea at Warrnambool. There are also several brackish or saline lakes within the basin, including Lake Burrumbeet and Lake Bolac.

Rainfall in the South of the basin is around 750mm per year and drops to 526mm at Lake Bolac, increasing with elevation to 700mm along the range. The mean annual runoff from the basin is 405,600 megalitres, which represents 2% of the total runoff generated in the state.

The Hopkins system has many significant attributes including boating opportunities, recreational fishing, scenic landscapes, Indigenous cultural heritage sites and native fish and fauna habitat.

Water entitlements and use

Apart from allocations on the Hopkins River, licence allocations in the Hopkins River Basin, also includes the major tributaries of Mount Emu Creek, Brucknell (Cudjee) Creek along with the sub catchment of the Merri River and its tributaries Drysdale and Spring Creeks.

General rules

Licences in the Hopkins River Basin are managed in accordance with the Water Act 1989 and Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences. A copy of these policies can be found on the Water Register website by clicking on the link below:

[Take and use licences - Water Register](#)

The general rules for licences in the Hopkins River Basin are as follows:

New licences

- The Hopkins River Basin is fully allocated, so no new licences can be issued.
- Permissible consumptive volume (PCV) for the Hopkins River Basin in 2024 was 18,186 ML

Metering

- Diversions are metered and licence holders must not use more than their licensed volume.
- Meters are installed on all active licences of 10ML or greater and all new licences regardless of the volume. Meters are read at least once a year.
- Stock and Domestic use is typically not metered.

Restrictions

- Take and use licences allow for SRW to roster and/or restrict extraction during periods of low water availability. Restrictions will be applied by SRW as required and SRW has adopted a message bank system that licence holders can access to determine the level of restriction.

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a Winterfill licence
- A Winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

Renewals

- Licences are renewed in accordance with the Water Act 1989 and Policies for Managing Take and Use Licences.

The general rules apply to all licences in the Hopkins River Basin, unless otherwise stated in the system specific rules.

System specific rules

Some systems within the Hopkins River Basin require more specific management rules that address rostering, restrictions and trade. In the Hopkins River Basin specific rules exist for the following systems:

- Hopkins River- refer to appendix 1
- Mount Emu Creek- refer to appendix 2
- Brucknell (Cudgee) Creek - refer to appendix 3
- Merri River (Zones A & Zone B) – refer to appendix 4

Consultation and review

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

References

- Agriculture Victoria – Victorian Resources Online

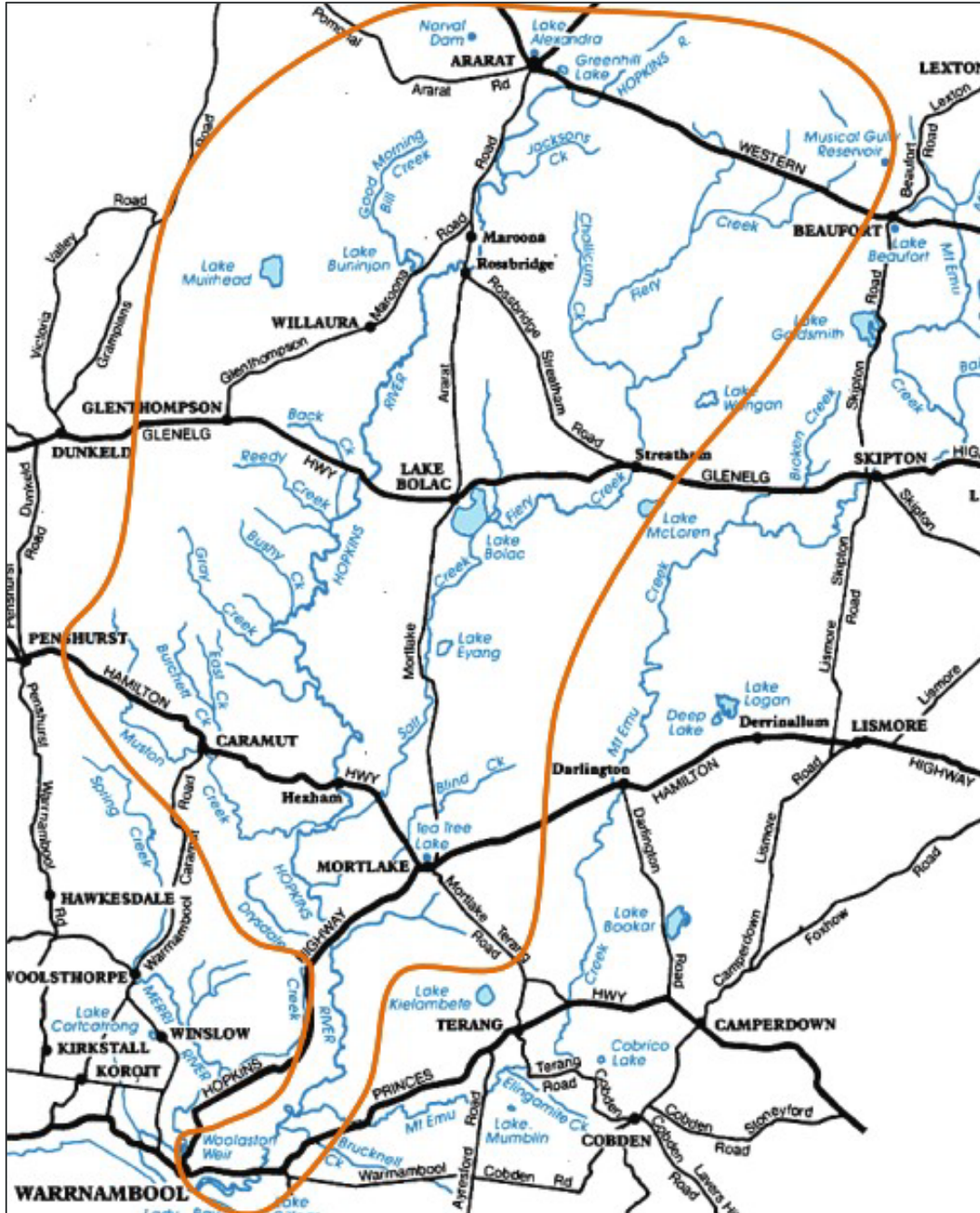
Contact details

For general information call 1300 139 510 or visit www.srw.com.au

Appendix 1 Hopkins River Rules

Area Description

The rules apply to all Hopkins River irrigation licences within the area shown below:



Management of Licences

The Hopkins River has the following five stage irrigation restriction regime based on flows at the Hopkins Falls Gauging station.

COMMENCE at STAGE 1	100% of Allocation Allowed
1 October each year or when the daily flow drops to 10 Megalitres.	
INCREASE to STAGE 2	75% of Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow drops below 7 megalitres.	
CONTINUE TO INCREASE STAGES	Allocation Allowed: Stage 3 - 50% Stage 4 – 25%
each day the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres.	
HOLD STAGE Should the daily flow increase to above 7 megalitres, the stage at that time is maintained until restrictions can be eased.	
IMPLEMENT STAGE 5 BAN	No Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres for four consecutive days.	
EASE RESTRICTIONS	
when the daily flow increases to above 12 megalitres, stages can be eased one stage every day.	

Management of the restrictions is by visual inspection and the gauging station flow level readings.

Southern Rural Water has adopted a message bank system to assist in the delivery of a more equitable allocation of the water resource for all licence holders. The message bank will indicate the stage level set for the river, for that day.

The 1300 365 607 (message bank) telephone number must be called to determine the stage level for the river, prior to any diversion on any given day.

Compliance Point

There is a surface water gauging station located immediately upstream of the Hopkins Falls, Hopkins Falls Road, Cudgee.

The flow levels can be obtained either by viewing on [WMIS](#), texting the gauging station or by a site inspection..

Southern Rural Water will:

- Continuously record the daily instantaneous flows at the Hopkins Falls Gauging station, once the restriction regime has been introduced; and
- periodically inspect the condition of the Hopkins Falls gauging station

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a Winterfill licence
- A Winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

Consultation and Review

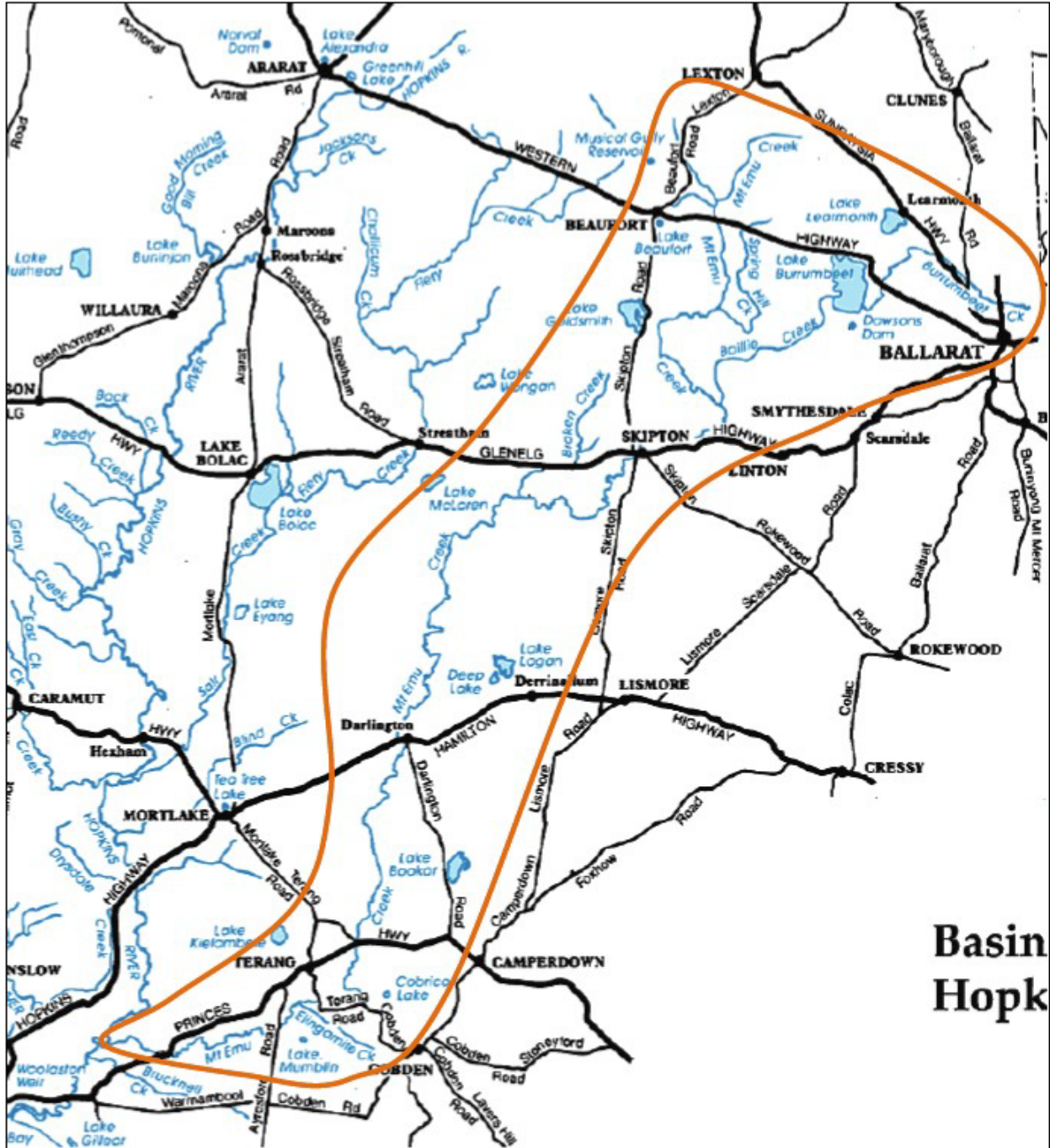
SRW will consult with licence holders and relevant stakeholders before making changes to the Local Management Plan, other than administrative changes or clarifications.

Appendix 2

Mt Emu Creek Rules

Area Description

These rules apply to Mount Emu Creek irrigation licence holders as shown below.



Management of Licences

The Mount Emu Creek has the following five stage restriction regime based on flows at Mount Emu Creek gauging station.

COMMENCE at STAGE 1	100% of Allocation Allowed
1 October each year or when the daily flow drops to 10 megalitres.	
INCREASE to STAGE 2	75% of Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow drops below 7 megalitres.	
CONTINUE TO INCREASE STAGES	Allocation Allowed: Stage 3 - 50% Stage 4 – 25%
each day the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres.	
HOLD STAGE Should the daily flow increase to above 7 megalitres, the stage at that time is maintained until restrictions can be eased.	
IMPLEMENT STAGE 5 BAN	No Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres for four consecutive days.	
EASE RESTRICTIONS	
when the daily flow increases to above 9 megalitres, stages can be eased one stage every day.	

Management of the restrictions is by visual inspection and the gauging station flow level readings.

Southern Rural Water has adopted a message bank system to assist in the delivery of a more equitable allocation of the water resource for all licence holders. The message bank will indicate the stage level set for the river, for that day.

The 1300 365 607 (message bank) telephone number must be called to determine the stage level for the river, prior to any diversion on any given day.

Compliance Point

There is a surface water gauging station (Gauge Site No.236216A) is located on the Mount Emu Creek at Ayrford Road bridge, Taroon, south of Terang.

The flow levels can be obtained either by viewing on [WMIS](#), texting the gauging station or by a site inspection.

Southern Rural Water will:

- Continuously record the daily instantaneous flows at the Mount Emu Creek Gauging station (236216A), once the restriction regime has been introduced; and
- Periodically inspect the condition of the Mount Emu Creek gauging station

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a Winterfill licence
- A Winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

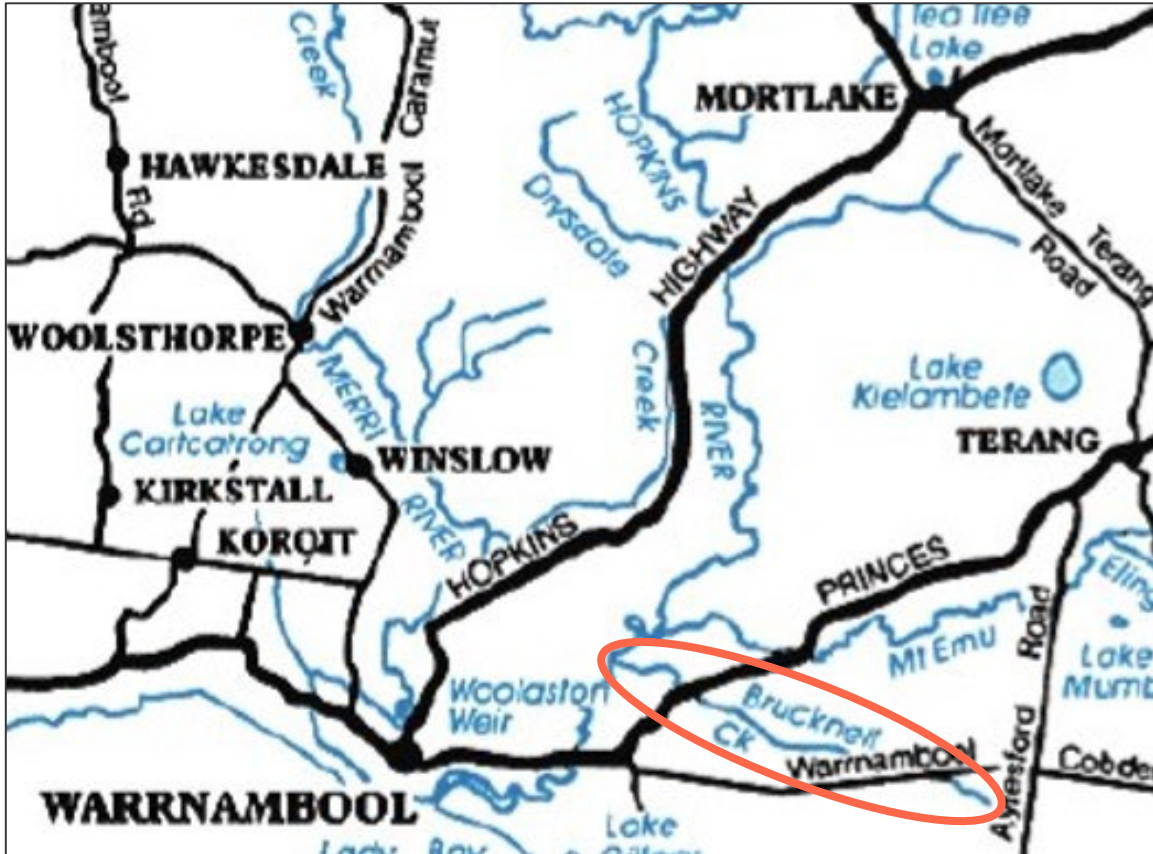
Consultation and Review

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

Appendix 3 Brucknell (Cudjee) Creek Rules

Area Description

These rules apply to Brucknell Creek (also referred to as Cudjee Creek) irrigation licence holders as shown below.



Management of Licences

The Brucknell Creek (Cudgee Creek) has the following five stage restriction regime based on flows at the Brucknell Creek (Cudgee) gauging station.

COMMENCE at STAGE 1	100% of Allocation Allowed
1 October each year or when the daily flow drops to 20 megalitres.	
INCREASE to STAGE 2	75% of Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow drops below 7 megalitres.	
CONTINUE TO INCREASE STAGES	Allocation Allowed: Stage 3 - 50% Stage 4 – 25%
each day the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres.	
HOLD STAGE Should the daily flow increase to above 7 megalitres, the stage at that time is maintained until restrictions can be eased.	
IMPLEMENT STAGE 5 BAN	No Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow remains below 7 megalitres for four consecutive days.	
EASE RESTRICTIONS	
when the daily flow increases to above 9 megalitres, stages can be eased one stage every day.	

Management of the restrictions is by visual inspection and the gauging station flow level readings.

Southern Rural Water has adopted a message bank system to assist in the delivery of a more equitable allocation of the water resource for all licence holders. The message bank will indicate the stage level set for the river, for that day.

The 1300 365 607 (message bank) telephone number must be called to determine the stage level for the river, prior to any diversion on any given day.

Compliance Point

There is a surface water gauging station (Gauge Site No.236212A) is located on the Brucknell Creek at the Cudjee Road Bridge at Cudjee

The flow levels can be obtained either by viewing on [WMIS](#), texting the gauging station or by a site inspection.

Southern Rural Water will:

- Continuously record the daily instantaneous flows at the Brucknell Creek Gauging station (236212A), once the restriction regime has been introduced; and
- Periodically inspect the condition of the Brucknell Creek gauging station

Transfers

- Temporary transfers of a licence (or part of a licence) can be for up to 5 years and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June).
- Permanent or temporary transfers of a direct stream (all-year licence) may only be approved if:
 - the licence will be transferred to a downstream user, or
 - the licence is issued to the buyer as a Winterfill licence
- A Winterfill licence cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year licence).

Consultation and Review

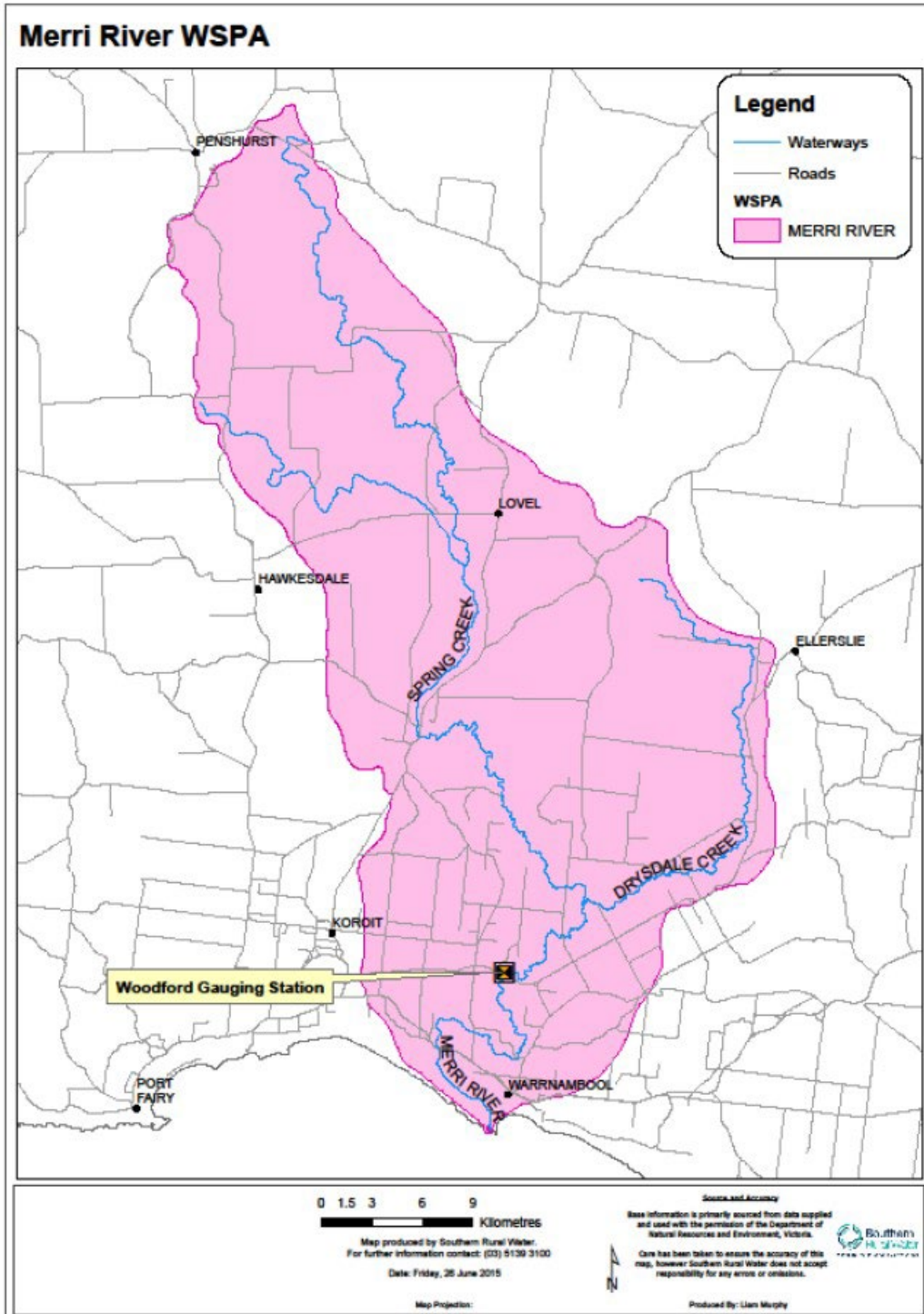
SRW will consult with licence holders and relevant stakeholders before making changes to the Local Management Plan, other than administrative changes or clarifications.

Appendix 4

Merri River Rules

Area Description

These rules apply to Merri River irrigation licence holders as shown below.



Management of Licences

Management of the river since 1998/99 has been based on a draft streamflow management plan – the first to be developed in the State for an unregulated river. The draft plan was developed by a committee with broad representation and went through a public consultation process. It aimed to find better ways to balance water use and environmental water needs.

The Merri River is split into two reaches for diversions management – Zone A upstream of Woodford and Zone B downstream of Woodford. Management of Zone A as well as Zone B are based on flows at the Woodford Road Bridge gauging station (Woodford GS).

Key points and environmental Flow requirements under the plan include:

- Maintaining a minimum summer flow of 10 ML per day, over a five-day rolling average at Woodford GS.
- A trigger for a ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous summer flow (November 1 to -June 30) falls below 8 ML per day at Woodford GS.
- A trigger for a ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous winter flow (July 1 to October 31) falls below 43 ML per day at Woodford GS;
- The year-round licence volume is capped at the current allocation; and
- 590 ML is available under a Winterfill licence cap. (July 1-October 31) (Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy, 2011)
- 21ML has been allocated prior to 2011 and 28ML was issued in 2015. Future licences will be subject to a site specific Sustainable Diversion Limit assessment.
- There are no new all-year licences available.

The restriction schedule has the ability to react to a rapid fall in flows or various weather conditions. Southern Rural Water can also implement a higher level of restriction quickly or even place an immediate total ban if flows fall below 8 ML's/day daily.

The Merri River has the following nine stage restriction regime based on flows at the Woodford Road bridge gauging station.

COMMENCE at STAGE 1	100% of Allocation Allowed
1 October each year or when the daily flow drops to 30 megalitres.	
INCREASE to STAGE 2	75% of Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow drops below 12 megalitres.	
CONTINUE TO INCREASE STAGES	Allocation Allowed: Stage 3 - 65% Stage 4 – 50% Stage 5 – 35% Stage 6 – 25%
each day the daily flow remains below 12 megalitres.	
INCREASE TO STAGES 7 AND 8	Stage 7 – 17.5% Stage 8 – 10%
each day the daily flows drop below 10 megalitres	
IMPLEMENT STAGE 9 BAN	No Allocation Allowed
when the daily flow drops below 8 megalitres	
EASE RESTRICTIONS FROM STAGES 1 TO 6	
when the daily flow increases to above 13 megalitres, stages can be eased one stage every day.	
EASE RESTRICTIONS FROM STAGES 7 TO 9	
when the daily flow increases to above 12 megalitres, stages can be eased one stage every day.	

Management of the restrictions is by visual inspection and the gauging station flow level readings.

Southern Rural Water has adopted a message bank system to assist in the delivery of a more equitable allocation of the water resource for all licence holders. The message bank will indicate the stage level set for the river, for that day.

The 1300 365 607 (message bank) telephone number must be called to determine the stage level for the river, prior to any diversion on any given day.

Compliance Point

The surface water gauging station (Gauge Site No.236205B) is located below the Woodford Road bridge at Woodford.

The flow levels can be obtained either by viewing on [WMIS](#), texting the gauging station or by a site inspection.

Southern Rural Water will:

- Continuously record the daily instantaneous flows at the Woodford Road bridge gauging station (No.236205B), once the restriction regime has been introduced; and
- Periodically inspect the condition of the Woodford Road bridge gauging station

Trading

Licences, both temporary and permanent, are transferable within the Merri River catchment subject to approval by Southern Rural Water and the following conditions:-

General Rules:

- a) Water may be traded downstream without restriction;
- b) Temporary transfers of a licence or part of a licence can be for up to 5 years and conclude at the end of the water season (30 June);
- c) A Winterfill licence (July to October) cannot be transferred to be a direct stream (all-year) licence;
- d) Approval of an upstream trade of an all-year licence can only occur if it is converted to become a Winterfill licence;
- e) The adverse effect on winter flows will be outweighed by the beneficial effect on summer flows, and this assessment is agreed to by the relevant CMA; and
- f) There will be no undue adverse impacts on other water users.

Winter Diversion Management

The Western Region Sustainable Water Strategy identified a Winterfill volume of 590 megalitres per year that is available under the sustainable diversion limits. There is a trigger ban on diversions if the minimum instantaneous winter flow (July 1 – October 31) falls below 43 ML per day at Woodford.

Consultation and Review

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