

From the CEO

The Australian Government has begun rolling out its new program to extend the Murray Darling Basin Plan implementation. While this gives more time for options to meet water recovery targets, it now also allows for buybacks to recover the 450GL as well as for community adjustment assistance for those Basin communities impacted by voluntary water purchases.

The NSW government does not support buybacks but recognises the Australian Government's obligation to deliver the Basin Plan. A report commissioned by the NSW government found:

- Rice, dairy and bulk wine industries are most vulnerable
- Water prices will increase over the long term
- Likely impacts in irrigation districts and networks

WMI will continue to work with the NSW and Australian Governments, MDBA and the NSW and National Irrigator Councils to ensure the best outcomes for the Curlwaa, Coomealla and Buronga Irrigation Areas.



Huge fines for wine company and vineyard manager: NRAR announcement 28 March 2024

A former Wentworth region wine company and its manager have together been fined close to half a million dollars by the NSW Land and Environment Court after pleading guilty to illegally tapping into a Western Murray Irrigation (WMI) pipeline and taking water from it.

It is the largest total fine achieved by the Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR) since it was established in 2018.

The company was convicted and fined \$326,500, while the former vineyard manager was convicted and will pay \$172,500.

The defendants have agreed to pay costs of \$95,000 to NRAR who brought the case to court.

The offences took place at two separate vineyards between 2016 and 2019 and involved illegal take of just under 365ML of water. The court heard that at the time of the offending, this water had a market value of up to \$305,000.

In her judgment handed down yesterday, Justice Sandra Duggan found that the conduct of the offenders was "intentional". She said she was "satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the offences were committed to the financial benefit of Jindalee Wines".

Justice Duggan also found that the offences formed "part of a planned or organised criminal activity" which took place over a long period of time.

Third Quarter Invoice 2023/24

due for payment:
4:30pm on 15 May 2024

On-call Officer
24 hours / 365 days
Ph: 0428 596 428

Office Hours: 9.00am to 4.30pm

Monday to Friday
T: (03) 5027 4953

E: enquiries@westernmurray.com.au
www.westernmurray.com.au

Upcoming office closures:

ANZAC Day: 25 April
King's Birthday: 10 June 2024

Evidence presented to the court detailed how pipes of various sizes had been used to tap into the main supply pipeline and then bypassed metering equipment. The illegal tapping pipework was buried underground and allowed unmetered water to be taken and used for irrigation.

Western Murray Irrigation first detected the illegal set-up after anomalies appeared in meter readings. This prompted further investigation by WMI staff who found evidence of tampering and reported the allegations to NRAR in March 2020.

NRAR then began its own painstaking investigation before launching the prosecution in April 2023.

This is the first time NRAR has prosecuted under sections 342 and 343 of the Water Management Act 2000, which are intended to protect water supply infrastructure and stop water being taken illegally from it.

NRAR Director Investigations and Enforcement Lisa Stockley said the Court's finding was significant for all NSW water users.

"Communities across NSW have said they want a fair, transparent and enforceable water compliance regime in place to prevent unlawful water take," Ms Stockley said.

"NRAR will take strong regulatory action when required. Those who commit serious, substantiated and wilful acts of non-compliance will face the full force of the law," she said.

"NRAR particularly acknowledges the significant contribution of WMI to this successful prosecution, from the initial detection of the offences and throughout the investigation.

End of year surplus water allocation trade

Customers are strongly encouraged to undertake their own individual trade up to the WMI cut-off date of 10am Wednesday 26 June 2024 to maximise returns.

It is highly unlikely that WMI will be able to undertake a bulk water allocation trade in those last days of June due to a lack of demand and over supply.

Third Quarterly Invoice Due for Payment

The third quarter invoice for 2023/24 is now available and due for payment on or before Wednesday 15 May 2024.

Please contact the office before the due date if there are any difficulties in prompt payment of accounts.

To have your quarterly invoices paid by direct debit from a nominated bank account, contact the office for a form and your invoice will always be paid on time.

Additional Water Fee Reminder

Water usage above allocation is billed quarterly at \$1,200/ML (or part thereof).

Please ensure you **always have a positive water allocation balance**. Customers should contact the friendly office staff for more information.

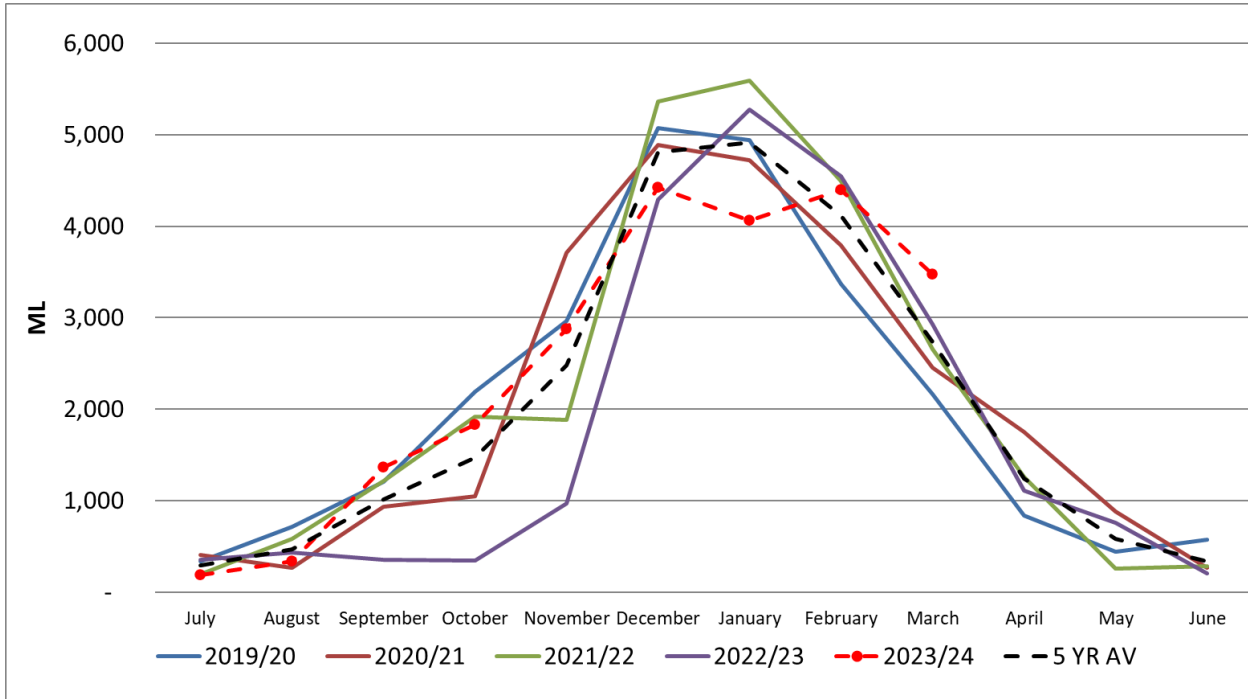
Please continue to keep outlets clean

WMI has invested significant resources in downsizing or removing outlets as part of the new charging system.

Customers are reminded to keep outlets free of weeds, equipment and rubbish, ensuring easy and safe access for our operations staff.

Total Water Pumped Over 5 Years (including Year to Date)

WMI pumped 22,949 ML of water between July 2023 and March 2024, 3% higher than the five-year average.



Climate Outlook: April to June 2024

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting below median rainfall and warmer than average days for most of Australia:

