

Q&As

Reconnecting Tarago Reservoir

Why is Tarago Reservoir being reconnected to Melbourne Water's water supply network?

In June 2005, the Victorian Minister for Water announced that Tarago Reservoir would again become part of Melbourne Water's supply network to provide extra water in response to the likely reduction in water yield associated with climate change.

Why is Melbourne Water building a new water treatment plant?

The Tarago Reservoir catchment is an 'open' water supply catchment with farming and other activities present in the land around the reservoir, and this can affect water quality.

The reservoir supplied Melbourne Water customers in Mornington Peninsula and Westernport until 1994 when supply was stopped due to declining water quality.

To bring the reservoir back into service, a new water treatment plant must be built.

Why did Tarago Reservoir stop supplying Mornington Peninsula and Westernport customers in 1994?

The reservoir often suffered from water quality issues and occasional algal blooms, and the quality of supply to the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport was variable. As a result, in 1994 Melbourne Water replaced the supply for those areas with high quality water from Cardinia Reservoir, and stopped using the Tarago Reservoir.

Local Gippsland communities were able to continue using the water as it was fully treated by Gippsland Water.

Is this just the city stealing water from Gippsland?

No, Melbourne Water will only be accessing the share of the water resource that it has historically been allocated.

Water from Tarago will continue to be shared with Gippsland Water for supply to local communities.

Melbourne Water owns and operates Tarago Reservoir and will continue to share the water with the other users including the environment, Southern Rural Water (for irrigators) and Gippsland Water.

Who is building the plant?

The plant is being built by construction partners Baulderstone Hornibrook and United Group, designer GHD and Superintendent Sinclair Knight Merz.

When will the treatment plant be completed?

The treatment plant is being fast-tracked to be completed mid-2009. Melbourne Water is striving to complete the plant as soon as possible.

How big is the plant?

The plant has the capacity to treat up to 70 million litres a day, although the total amount of water it produces will depend on the availability of water in the reservoir and Melbourne's entitlement.

How much extra water will Melbourne Water get by reconnecting Tarago Reservoir?

Reconnecting Tarago Reservoir is likely to produce an extra 15 billion litres of water a year on average, or up to 21 billion litres on average if inflows return to pre-drought conditions.

How does the water treatment process work?

The key components of the process are Dissolved Air Flotation and Filtration (DAFF) and ultraviolet (UV) disinfection (see diagram).

In basic terms, this includes:

1. Filtration
2. Disinfection
3. Fluoridation
4. pH correction
5. Disposal of filtered solids

Will you be storing chemicals on the site?

Like Gippsland Water's Warragul and Neerim South Treatment Plants, and Melbourne Water's Winneke Treatment Plant, chemicals are needed for the treatment process. All chemicals will be stored in accordance with Worksafe and EPA requirements.

During operation, will staff be on site all the time?

The plant, like all modern facilities, can be operated remotely and so round the clock staffing is not required. Staff will generally only be onsite during the day, 7 days a week, to undertake routine testing, maintenance tasks and to supervise any deliveries.

How much traffic will access the site once it's in operation?

There will be minimal traffic when the plant is in operation. Similar to a functioning dairy farm, it is expected that one or two trucks may visit the plant every couple of days. During the week and occasionally on weekends, Melbourne Water staff will come and go in their vehicles.

Where is the new treatment facility located?

The site is located on the route of the existing Tarago-Westernport pipeline at 880 Main Neerim Road, Drouin West, approximately 9km south-west of the reservoir.

This site was chosen after consultation with local landowners and other members of the community, and development of guidelines for the construction phase and day-to-day operations.

Why does Melbourne Water need extra water?

Victoria has been enduring an extensive drought period since 1997 which has resulted in greatly reduced reservoir levels across the state. Climate change predictions are

also showing that water yields from catchments will be reduced in years to come as compared to historical records.

The Victorian Government has announced three significant water supply projects to address this concern, including the reconnection of Tarago Reservoir, the Foodbowl Modernisation Project/Sugarloaf Pipeline, and a seawater desalination plant.

Reconnection of Tarago is the first of these projects and will provide around 15 billion litres of water per year on average, or up to 21 billion litres if inflows return to pre-drought conditions.

Who else uses water from the reservoir?

Water from the reservoir is currently used by Gippsland Water customers and Southern Rural Water irrigation customers. Their existing rights to water, as defined under previous agreements, will not be affected by this project.

Will reconnecting Tarago Reservoir to Melbourne affect supply to local communities?

The Tarago Reservoir has always been an important water source for local and regional communities, and that will remain the case.

Water from Tarago Reservoir will continue to be used by Gippsland Water for supply to local communities, and by local irrigators. The additional water to be drawn from Tarago by Melbourne Water will be supplied to the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport regions.

Efforts to improve the quality of water in the Tarago catchment will deliver significant benefits for local communities in terms of the security of water supplies and improved river health.

What impact will the reconnection have on Tarago River and downstream irrigators?

River levels in the Tarago River have been artificially high in recent years as water has been released downstream of the reservoir rather than being used by Melbourne Water. Downstream irrigators have been able to access water volumes in excess of the rights agreed to them.

Once Melbourne Water begins using the reservoir again, river levels will not be as high as they have historically been. However, existing rights to water will not be affected by the reconnection. The irrigators (via Southern Rural Water), Gippsland Water customers, the environment and Melbourne Water will continue to share the water in the reservoir.

The Department of Sustainability and Environment is currently working to formalise existing rights by issuing bulk entitlements.

Why is a new plant needed? Can't Melbourne Water use Gippsland Water's existing treatment plants that are already connected to the reservoir?

The water treatment plants operated by Gippsland Water at Neerim South and Warragul are dedicated to local communities. They do not have the capacity to

handle the additional volumes of water to be drawn from the reservoir from 2009 for Melbourne Water customers.

Does the new water treatment facility mean people in the Mornington Peninsula and Westernport region will get better quality water than local communities?

All water drawn from the Tarago Reservoir is treated to the same high standards, regardless of where it goes. Water for Neerim South, Drouin, Rokeby and Warragul is treated to high standards by Gippsland Water. Melbourne Water's new treatment plant will match these high treatment standards.

What will the water treatment plant look like?

The plant will consist of a small collection of buildings and sheds, and a large treated water storage tank. A secure fence will enclose the site.

A comprehensive landscaping plan has been developed to help minimise the visual impact of the buildings. Trees and bushes that are native to the area will be planted to help screen the facility, and an earth mound and cut will help set the buildings in to the side of the hill.

Where is the Tarago Reservoir?

The Tarago Reservoir stores water from the Tarago River and is located 95 kilometres east of Melbourne, near Neerim South.

The dam was constructed in 1969 and enlarged in 1971. Tarago Reservoir has a capacity of 37,500 million litres.

Has Melbourne Water always managed the reservoir?

No. Melbourne Water began managing the reservoir in 1991. Prior to then, the Mornington Peninsula and District Water Board managed the reservoir. The dam wall was constructed by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.

What is being done to improve water quality in the reservoir? What is the Tarago Catchment Management Plan?

The Tarago Reservoir is an important water supply source for local and regional communities. However, water quality in the reservoir and surrounding waterways is impacted by agricultural, residential and forestry activities in the catchment.

The Tarago Catchment Management Plan aims to involve the local community in activities to improve water quality from the forested and agricultural lands surrounding the reservoir.

Melbourne Water has been working with Gippsland Water, Baw Baw Shire Council, local landowners, and environment and community groups to develop a comprehensive plan to manage the Tarago Reservoir catchment and its waterways for the long-term.

The Tarago Catchment Management Plan contains a number of projects that aim to protect water quality for current and future human consumption, conserve soils in the catchment and ensure sustainable farming practices into the future.

These efforts will deliver significant benefits for local communities in terms of the security of water supplies and improved river health.

Where can I find more information about the Tarago Reconnection Project?

Information on the Tarago Reconnection Project is available on Melbourne Water's website at melbournewater.com.au/tarago or by calling Melbourne Water on **131 722**.

If you have inquiries about the construction project, please call **1800 096 546** (free call).