

# update

*I love living here*  
So please protect our rivers & creeks™



## Drought response and environmental flows in the Werribee River Catchment

Melbourne Water is working with community partners to investigate the environmental flows needed for a healthy Werribee River.

Establishing environmental flows, the amount of water that needs to flow through the river at various times to keep it healthy, is a process that links community values with science.

Melbourne Water's Rebecca Johnston explains that the Werribee River has its own complex ecology. She says that undertaking thorough research and combining the findings with an understanding of community expectations is the key to determining optimal environmental flows.

"In listening to the community you are immediately struck by the passion that people have for the river," she says. "Of course there are differing perspectives, but that sense of passion is a common thread."



Rebecca and her team draw on the work of the Port Phillip and Westernport Waterwatch program. The Waterwatch program is an education and monitoring program aimed at increasing community understanding and ownership of local rivers and creeks supported by Melbourne Water. The program encourages community volunteers to find out more about the river by taking water quality samples.

"With Waterwatch we have identified seven 'refuge' points along the river that support aquatic animals and plants during periods of drought," she explains. "The local community members have adopted these deeper pools – so crucial in drought conditions – and watch over them. It's great to see that community spirit in action."



## Melbourne Water's rain gauge operators

At 9 o'clock every morning, in homes across the Port Phillip and Westernport region, a time-honoured ritual takes place: Melbourne Water's 360 private rain gauge operators check their gauges.

Melbourne Water's Paul Rasmussen oversees the findings from this hardy band of volunteers.

"There's a real sense of community among the operators," he says. "One gentleman has been with us for more than 50 years."

"We operate automated monitoring stations," explains Paul, "but readings provided by the volunteers enhances that data. Getting the most accurate picture of rainfall patterns helps us with our flood and drought responses, and assists us in understanding the water required in our rivers and creeks to support platypus, native fish and plant life."

Currently we're looking for operators in the Melton Shire. If you would like to get started as a rain gauge operator please call 131 722, and for more information about rainfall data visit [melbournewater.com.au](http://melbournewater.com.au)

Please turn over for **important information** about the proposed **Waterways Charge** relating to your Melton Shire property



# The Waterways Charge: an investment in your community

As part of the Victorian Government's *Our Water Our Future* action plan, Melbourne Water's waterways and drainage boundary has been extended to cover the majority of the Port Phillip and Westernport catchment, an increase in area of more than 5,000 square kilometres.

Melbourne Water is now the caretaker of river health and the authority responsible for regional drainage, waterways and floodplain management throughout the entire region.

The boundary extension means that, since November 2005, Melbourne Water has been providing services to the Melton Shire for the first time. Melbourne Water has been improving the health and management of the region's waterways, drainage systems and floodplains through works including weed removal, replanting, erosion management and the construction of major drains, flood retarding basins and stormwater treatment wetlands.

These projects, and the ongoing support Melbourne Water is providing to local community groups, will be funded by the Waterways Charge. This is an annual charge that will appear on your water bill.

Melbourne Water has had responsibility for delivery of these services to part of the Port Phillip and Westernport region since the 1920s. The majority of these works are funded through a charge which is currently paid by the 1.5 million property owners in Melbourne Water's existing service area.

From July this year, the property based Waterways Charge will be collected by Western Water on behalf of Melbourne Water.

The Waterways Charge is ultimately set by the Essential Services Commission after consultation with the community. The charges at the time of printing are detailed in the table below. Please visit [www.esc.vic.gov.au](http://www.esc.vic.gov.au) to read the Commission's final pricing decision.

If you would like to know more about the charge – and the important work it funds – please contact Western Water on 1300 650 422, or visit [melbournewater.com.au](http://melbournewater.com.au)

Charges for 2008/09 (at time of printing)	
Residential (inside Urban Growth Boundary)	Flat charge of \$63* pa
Non-residential (inside Urban Growth Boundary)	Flat charge of \$82* pa
Rural (properties outside the Urban Growth Boundary)	Flat charge of \$39* pa

\*Prices to apply from 1 July 2008 will reflect any further adjustments arising from the Essential Services Commission's Final Determination.

The Urban Growth Boundary is set by the State Government and indicates the long-term limits of urban development. For more information on the Urban Growth Boundary, please visit [www.dse.vic.gov.au/melbourne2030online](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/melbourne2030online)



## Melbourne Water services and works in the Shire of Melton

This list provides examples of local Shire of Melton works either proposed or currently being undertaken:

- We have given 25 grants worth \$307,000 to the Melton Shire Council for Corridors of Green projects and to community groups under the Community Grants program across the Melton Shire.
- We have undertaken willow removal, woody weed control and revegetation at the Western Water Recycle Water Plant at Melton for approximately 1.5 kilometres downstream of the Melton Reservoir. This project commenced in 2006 in conjunction with Western Water and the Pinkerton Landcare and Environment Group.
- In December 2007 we commenced approximately 6.5 kilometres of weed control and revegetation at the future Toolern Creek Regional Park downstream of Bridge Road, South Melton. This project will be staged over two years working with Melton Shire Council, Parks Victoria and local landowners.
- We are working to improve river health along Toolern Creek and Little Blind Creek. These works compliment existing Stream Frontage Management works undertaken by two adjacent landowners and the Friends of Toolern Creek and Melton Environment Group.
- We have assumed management responsibility for the Werribee Hydrologic Data Collection Network. This network monitors rainfall and flows in key waterways in the Werribee catchment and required upgrading and extension.

### Did you know...

- That the waterways and floodplains in the Port Phillip and Westernport region support 1,800 species of native plants and 600 species of native animals.
- We will develop Flood Management Plans in partnership with local councils. The plans will coordinate flood management activities such as flood mapping, mitigation programs, education and awareness to manage risk in the community.