

2. WATER PRODUCTION AND BULK SALES - SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

(Paul Wearne)

Since the preparation of the Business Paper for today's meeting the Prime Minister announced on 19 April 2007 that there is the possibility of no water being available for irrigation within the Murray – Darling Basin next financial year unless significant rainfall occurs prior to the end of May 2007.

The continuing drought, and in particular the very dry spring required Council to impose restrictions during the summer period so that consumption would remain within sustainable levels (i.e. within allocation). This has been achieved as is evident from the attached graphs and resulted in restrictions being lifted as of 4 April 2007.

The Group Leader, Production & Distribution and the General Manager will be attending a meeting in Leeton on 30 April convened by the Executive Director of Water Management for the Department of Natural Resources. The meeting has been convened “to provide information and the opportunity to discuss water resources in the Murrumbidgee Valley for the coming year.” It is hoped that this meeting will give a better understanding of what the ensuing year may hold. High Security allocations for the current water year have not been reduced and General Security allocations for this year were set at 10% of entitlement. General Security allocations for next year could be set at 0% but there has been no announcement with respect to High Security (and Local Water Authorities) allocations.

Local Water Utilities account for less than 5% of the allocated water from within the Murrumbidgee Valley with Goldenfields Water only having one (1) extraction point for surface water, that being the Jugiong Filtration Plant that has an entitlement of 5,590 megalitres per year.

Routine reservoir cleaning was programmed to commence on Monday 23 April but this has been suspended at least until after today's meeting. The routine swabbing and flushing of the Oura header mains, Junee, Coolamon and Ganmain townships was deferred from early April, due to the dry conditions, and programmed for early May. Council has continued to be proactive rather than reactive in respect of its flushing and cleaning program which has seen the number of dirty water complaints significantly reduced to those of our early days. Whilst it is possible to ‘skip’ the cleaning of some reservoirs programmed for this year without having an adverse effect on water quality, the cleaning of some mains and reservoirs particularly those close to bore source(s) may still be required. The amount of water ‘lost’ during this process is not significant however the public perception of seeing water ‘running down the streets’ is difficult to manage.

Taking into consideration the recent announcement by the Prime Minister, the question that now has to be asked is does Council have a social responsibility to set an example to the broader community by endeavouring to reduce water consumption? It is suggested that the position be closely monitored and that the General Manager, in consultation with

the Chairman or in his absence, the Deputy Chairman, be authorised to take whatever action is deemed appropriate once more information is available.

Recommendation

That the General Manager, in consultation with the Chairman or in his absence, the Deputy Chairman, be authorised to take whatever action is deemed appropriate once more information is available