

#### **4. CRITICAL WATER AVAILABILITY FOR 2007-08 SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT** (*Paul Wearne*)

Since the preparation of the Business Paper for this meeting, the (Federal) Department of the Environment and Water Resources has released the Murray-Darling Basin Dry Inflow Contingency Planning, Overview Report to First Minister, May 2007. A copy of the report is attached for the information of Council. The report is still recommending (page 13) that all outside water use for domestic purposes be prohibited from July 1 2007. Recommendation 6 of the report (page 8) suggests some flexibility in the allocation of water is permitted by State and Territories and their authorities in exceptional circumstances.

Discussions with Department of Water and Energy (DWE) representatives have been ongoing. The latest information (received in the late afternoon of Tuesday 26 June 2007) by way of a Media Release from Minister Koperberg, was forwarded to Councillors the same day. A copy is attached. Whilst the communiqué states that “the Lemma Government today reminded towns along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers that Level Four water restrictions should come into force from Sunday July 1” it does not advise what “Level 4 Restrictions” actually are and how Local Water Utilities (LWU) will be required to implement, police and/or manage such restrictions. The communiqué also states that “specific restrictions under Level Four can vary slightly across jurisdictions...” which may give a degree of flexibility.

An information pamphlet (copy attached) has been prepared for inclusion in the next mail out of water accounts scheduled for the first week in July. This has been done in an effort to keep customers informed and to forewarn them of the possibility of restrictions being implemented should Goldenfields either be directed to or find it necessary to further restrict consumption. However the window of opportunity to alter this inclusion is extremely small (i.e. close of business this afternoon).

The matter of water was the topic of much debate at the REROC meeting held yesterday (27/06/07). As advised in the Business Paper, GWCC forwarded to DWE on 8 June our “critical water requirements” for July, August and September as did all LWU’s within the REROC area. With this in mind, the direction that REROC members suggested be taken was for LWU’s to impose restrictions that would allow them to stay within their respective “critical water requirements” while still maintaining a degree of flexibility for their communities. Consequently it was resolved that REROC member councils wherever possible, try to have similar levels of restriction across the entire area. It was also resolved that once individual councils determine the level of restriction to be imposed in their respective areas, they forward this information to Ministers Koperberg and Rees stressing the reasons behind making such decisions and enforcing that LWU’s are best placed to ascertain what best meets the needs of its communities.

Riverina Water County Council met yesterday afternoon and resolved to continue with their present level of restrictions and that “the restrictions are that the use of fixed hoses,

sprays and fixed sprinkler systems are prohibited for domestic gardens and commercial gardens. There is no restriction on the use of hand held hoses.” Likewise, Gundagai Shire Council has imposed Level 3 Restrictions which provide for the use of hand held hoses only for two hours per day by domestic consumers.

Taking the above into consideration, I reluctantly must admit that efforts to have Council’s position clarified have not been successful to date. It would appear that the majority of LWU within the Murrumbidgee valley have opted to impose some form of restriction as of 1 July 2007 albeit at varying levels. As to whether this approach is the most appropriate one is a decision for individual water utilities.

Staff are of the opinion that the possibility of heavy restrictions being required from Spring 2007 onwards is very high (although recent rain will hopefully have an impact) and whilst we have and will continue to request that customers conserve water, this approach is somewhat of a “toothless tiger”. It is therefore suggested that a formal level of restriction be implemented. It is acknowledged that any form of restriction will have minimal impact on consumption during the winter months but it will assist customers in becoming familiar with restriction levels thus making less of an impact should more severe restrictions be required in the coming months.

### **Recommendation**

1. That Council impose the following Restrictions from 7 July 2007 until further notice.

<b>DOMESTIC</b>	
Domestic Gardens Watering	Sprinklers, fixed hoses and fixed sprinkler systems are prohibited
Private Swimming Pools	Filling of pools is prohibited
Washing of paved areas and roofs	Bucket only except as required by law
<b>PUBLIC/COMMERCIAL</b>	
Public Gardens, Sports Grounds and Bowling Greens	Sprinklers for 1 hour per day
Washing of Motor Vehicles	No Restriction
Water Cartage from Town Supply	From Council’s Public Standpipes only
<b>INDUSTRIAL</b>	
Ready Mixed Concrete, Abattoirs	No Restriction
Others	No Restriction

Consumers not listed above should contact Council to seek clarification of the impact on them.

2. That a public awareness campaign be undertaken to inform consumers and the public of the imposed restriction.