

Audit snapshot

April 2024

Audit – Management of Groundwater – Goulburn-Murray (Groundwater) Water Resource Plan Area

To assess whether Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) are complying with rules in the Goulburn-Murray (Groundwater) Water Resource Plan (WRP) Area for the Katunga Water Supply Protection Area (Katunga WSPA). The focus of the audit was on the trade of groundwater access rights and management of risk associated with the structural integrity of aquifers, hydraulic relationships and water quality.

Why we did this audit

- The IGWC compliance priorities identified the management of increased groundwater use as a key risk to be monitored.
- Increased use and demand for groundwater can lead to declining pressure levels, permanent salinity and drawdown problems and reversal of flow direction if not appropriately managed.
- The Katunga WSPA had the highest volume of groundwater traded in Victoria during 2020/21.

Key facts

- The Goulburn-Murray (Groundwater) Water Resource Plan was accredited in June 2020.
- A Groundwater Management Plan for the Katunga WSPA was developed to provide information about the groundwater system and rules describing how the resource is managed.
- The Katunga WSPA covers an area of approximately 2,100 km².
- A Permissible Consumptive Volume (PCV) cap of 60,577 Megalitres (ML) has been declared for the Katunga WSPA.

What we found

- GMW and DEECA are meeting the requirements of the Goulburn-Murray (Groundwater) Water Resource Plan relating to trade of groundwater access rights and management of risk.

- The audit identified 3 findings that could improve the extent of compliance:
 1. Sufficient hydraulic connectivity between the location of the seller and location of the buyer before the trade of a water access right is approved is not transparent within the Katunga Groundwater Management Plan.
 2. Manual water level measurements collected for announcing allocations are not being entered into the groundwater database within 30 days of collection as required by the Groundwater Management Plan.
 3. Information used to determine allocation announcements differed between the Katunga WSPA annual report and the Victorian Water Measurement Information System (WMIS).

Areas for improvement

- GMW should consider including information on their website to explain why no new licences have been issued since 2006 in the Katunga WSPA.
- The Groundwater Management Plan should identify that trade between the Shepparton Irrigation Region Groundwater Management Area (Shepparton GMA) and Katunga WSPA is not allowed.
- The Groundwater Management Plan should be updated to explain why it includes monitoring bores that are in the Shepparton GMA.

60,577ML

current PCV for the
Katunga WSPA

268

existing groundwater
licences in Katunga WSPA

0

There have been no
new licences issued since
1 July 2019