

Media Release

The Hon Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
Acting Minister for Water



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TRADE RULES TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT AND IRRIGATORS

The Andrews Labor Government is consulting the community to manage delivery risks for Victorian irrigators and help protect our rivers from unseasonal high flows.

Acting Minister for Water Richard Wynne today released a regulatory impact statement (RIS) for consultation on proposed new operating rules for Goulburn to Murray inter-valley trade arrangements.

In 2019, the Government announced a review of the inter-valley trade rule for the Goulburn River, following two consecutive years of sustained high flows over summer and autumn that caused damage to the banks and ecology of the river.

The high flows are driven by low water availability from New South Wales and increasing trade volumes in recent years.

Our initial review has shown that the current rules are not protecting the environment of the lower Goulburn River and do not provide a level playing field for all water users to trade water.

Releasing the RIS is the next step for establishing new long-term operating, trade and tagging rules to support trade opportunities, protect existing entitlement holders across Northern Victoria and minimise damage to rivers.

Consultation will run online and face-to-face for six weeks, closing on 30 April 2021. Feedback from the community will be considered before a final decision prior to 1 July 2021.

Getting operating and trade rules right on the Goulburn River is part of the Government's focus on delivery risks.

The changes identified in this RIS build on the Government's previous work through Water for Victoria in 2016 to improve northern Victorian trading rules, as well as our recent action to manage lower Murray extractions and protect existing users' delivery rights.

The proposed changes also build on outcomes Victoria has secured from the Commonwealth and other states.

Those include an independent panel to review the Murray-Darling Basin Authority's modelling on delivery of water through the connected southern Basin system, and seeking agreement from all states to look at the cumulative impacts of new extractions in the lower Murray region.

For more information go to engage.vic.gov.au/goulburn-murray-trade-rule-review

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Water Richard Wynne

"We're working to protect our waterways with new balanced rules that support our irrigators and provide certainty for the future."

"We know that delivery risks in the Murray are real – that's why the rules we're proposing will make sure that water traded from the Goulburn can be delivered each year. We want to support our irrigators that rely on trade without affecting others or damaging the environment."

"The arrangements we've had in place over the last two irrigation seasons worked to keep flows to more reasonable levels – we're now proposing a new rule that makes sure we can deliver trade under more sustainable lower flows."

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