

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Police
Minister for Water



Friday, 1 April 2022

DESAL WATER ORDER BALANCES BILLS AND WATER SECURITY

The Andrews Labor Government has ordered 15 gigalitres of water from the Victorian Desalination Plant in Wonthaggi to keep household bills low and build on Melbourne's long-term water security.

Independent expert advice from Melbourne water corporations recommended a 15 GL order – 110 GL lower than last year's order – this means that Melbourne household water bills will remain stable for the year ahead.

Melbourne's water bills are among the lowest in Australia. Like household bills, water bills for businesses are also expected to remain stable as a result of the order.

While the current La Nina event saw rainfall at above average levels in Melbourne's catchments last year, we know with the impact of climate change, extended dry periods will come –and we need to keep storages at healthy levels.

Melbourne has experienced below average inflows to the storages in 16 of the last 20 years.

This order will ensure our water supply is managed responsibly and keep storages at the levels required to avoid damaging water restrictions – like the ones we saw in the 2000s.

Melburnians currently use 50 to 70 GL more water per year than what flows into our storages, dependant on rainfall. The desalination plant has supplied around 24 per cent of our storage capacity since the plant was turned on in 2016, without it storage levels would be below 62 per cent.

The decision to order desalinated water is made each year based on yearly weather changes and expert advice from our water authorities.

Regular desalinated water orders are a normal part of Melbourne's drinking water supply, supplementing storages and providing an adequate buffer in the event of severe drought. They also support surrounding regions including South Gippsland and Barwon including Geelong.

To ensure our city and regions can continue to access a secure water supply into the future, we're setting out our 50-year plan to sustainably manage our water resources as part of the Central and Gippsland Sustainable Water Strategy.

In addition to desalinated water, this strategy will ease demand on our drinking supplies by investing in water efficiency and saving, recycled water and stormwater reuse and campaigns such as Target 155 to encourage households to reduce their water use.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

"This year's smaller order of 15 GL means we can maintain secure supplies and keep water bills stable – so Melbourne's water bills remain equal lowest in Australia."

"Demand for water is already outstripping supply in Melbourne – the desalination plant keeps our storages healthy and ensures we have enough water to meet this demand as our state grows."

"Everyone has a role to play in saving water into the future and we're investing in projects that increase the use of recycled water and stormwater to conserve our precious drinking supply."

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