

# Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Police

Minister for Water



Wednesday, 15 June 2022

## STRIKING A SUSTAINABLE BALANCE FOR THE GOULBURN RIVER

The Andrews Labor Government is protecting the long-term health of the lower Goulburn River while supporting irrigators' access to water when they need it.

Minister for Water Lisa Neville today announced new permanent trade and operating rules for the Goulburn to Murray, keeping flows lower over summer and autumn, while not increasing delivery risk for irrigators.

Over recent years, there has been increased pressure on the Murray River and Goulburn River to deliver trade and environmental water, which has led to constant high flows in the Goulburn during summer. These high flows prevent vegetation growth and fish breeding and cause erosion and bank degradation.

Two extreme dry years from 2017 to 2019 saw no trade available from the Murrumbidgee system in New South Wales and no in-flows from the Darling – pushing up demand from the Goulburn River to new levels, causing continuous high flows.

Interim trade rules were put in place for the Goulburn River in 2019 and were extended last year. Over the past 12 months, further testing has been conducted and consultation with scientists, river operators, Traditional Owners, environmental waterway managers, irrigators and the community to settle on rules for the long term.

From 1 July, we will be replacing the interim rules with similar long-term trade and operating rules.

In an average year, new trade opportunity will be around 150 gigalitres, an increase from 130 gigalitres under the interim rule, while still allowing for extended low flows in summer. This is a similar amount of trade to 2020, and more than we saw last year.

Water will be delivered in a smarter, more sustainable way that respects the environmental, cultural and community values. Getting the trade rules right for the Goulburn River is part of the important work the Labor Government has done to protect existing entitlement holders from increasing delivery risks in the Murray River.

This includes working through the Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council on deliverability issues and limiting any new extractions in the Victorian Lower Murray region.

The permanent rules include an exemption for tagged water use restrictions for the Lower Broken Creek while trade and water use behaviours on the Lower Broken Creek are monitored over the next four years.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

*“We are making sure the lower Goulburn River is managed to protect its environmental health and its recreational, community and cultural values while protecting irrigators’ access to water.”*

*“The new rules will support irrigators by providing sustainable trade opportunities without impacting other water users or damaging the environment.”*