

# Media Release

**The Hon Harriet Shing MP**

Minister for Water

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Equality



Friday, 23 September 2022

## MANAGING VICTORIA'S WATER SUPPLY

Melbourne's water supply is in its best position in more than a quarter of a century – with three consecutive years of above average rainfall combined with use of our desalination plant ensuring our storage stays above 90 per cent.

Based on these storage levels, projected weather patterns including a third straight summer of predicted La Niña events, demand, and the risk of spill, Melbourne Water has today provided independent advice recommending the Victorian Government cease the remainder of the 2022/23 desalination order.

Minister for Water Harriet Shing has accepted this advice and the desalination order will be halted, effective immediately.

To date, the Victorian Desalination Plant has delivered 3.4 gigalitres of this year's 15 gigalitre order – 110 GL lower than last year's order, ensuring Melbourne's water bills have remained among the lowest in Australia.

Melbourne retail water corporations – Greater Western Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water – will ensure households only pay for the water which has already been delivered, and families can expect their next bills to be slightly lower with desalination costs removed.

Demand from our rainfall-dependent water sources already outstrips supply – Melburnians currently use 50 to 70 GL more water per year than what flows into our storages, and our desalination plant has supplied around 24 per cent of storage capacity since being turned on in 2016.

Without regular desalination orders, Victoria would not be able to meet the growth in demand - to plan for this, the Government is delivering the *Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy*, outlining a pathway to secure the region's water future over the next 50 years.

Amid a changing climate which will lead to a future of volatile weather, hotter temperatures and more severe drought, the Government is preparing now so Victoria's communities, farmers, industry and tourism can have confidence in the state's future water supply.

In a severe drought, storage levels can drop by 20 percent in as little as a year – which is why management of water supply must be responsibly managed to avoid challenging water restrictions like those in place during the Millennium Drought.

Melbourne Water will provide advice on future water orders in early 2023, following consideration of reservoir levels at the time, hydrologic modelling and the Annual Water Outlook for the year ahead.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Harriet Shing

*"The desalination plant is a critical part of our long-term water supply – we keep our water storages as high as possible to protect water security not only for today, but for generations to come."*

*"We are acting on the best advice about our resource position – adapting to the very rare event of three successive La Niña events."*