

Media Release

The Hon Harriet Shing MP
Minister for Housing
Minister for Water
Minister for Equality



Tuesday, 21 November 2023

NEW 'PLACE OF TAKE' GIVES VICTORIAN IRRIGATORS CERTAINTY

The Allan Labor Government is delivering more certainty and flexibility for water users along the Murray, Goulburn, Loddon, Campaspe, Broken, Ovens, Werribee, and Thomson-Macalister River systems.

Minister for Water Harriet Shing announced that the new Place of Take framework is now in force, protecting water users' rights to take water from the rivers during the event of a shortfall.

A shortfall occurs when water that is entitled cannot be delivered when and where it is needed, this can result in temporary restrictions on the amount of water users are permitted to take along impacted parts of the river system.

The new Place of Take framework has been introduced to address the increasing delivery risks in the Murray River system downstream of Barmah, where the 'Barmah Choke' or 'narrows' is reducing in capacity and demand for water is making it harder to deliver water where and when people need it.

Since 2019, all works licence applications in the Murray system downstream of Barmah were referred to the Minister for Water. Since that time, no new extraction share has been issued within the region.

The changes announced today make extraction share - the river diverters' right to a share of water available in a shortfall – an enduring right. Previously extraction share was attached to a works licence which expired every 5 to 15 years.

In systems with the highest shortfall risk – the Murray downstream of Barmah and the Ovens-King system, extraction share volumes have been capped to protect existing rights.

These changes give water users greater certainty about their right to have water delivered as well as more flexibility to manage their own delivery risks.

The new Place of Take framework also includes stronger penalties for non-compliance under the new rules. Depending on the extent of the non-compliance, private landholders can be fined up to \$230,000 and \$1.15 million for a corporation.

Stronger penalties will protect water users and the environment from the impacts of others taking more than their fair share during a shortfall when restrictions are in place.

The 'Place of Take' rules were informed by water users along the Murray, Goulburn, Loddon, Campaspe, Broken, Ovens, Werribee, and Thomson-Macalister systems and engagement with the Consultative Committee of irrigators from across the state.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Harriet Shing

"The new Place of Take approvals clarify and protect existing water users' rights to take water during the rare event that river restrictions are required, giving them more certainty in times of drought."

"As our climate gets drier it's critical we continue to adapt our water management to ensure both the needs to the environment and other water users can be met."

Media contact: Siobhan McKenna 0480 147 921 | siobhan.mckenna@minstaff.vic.gov.au