

2024 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area

The Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Area (GMA) covers the Ovens River catchment downstream of Myrtleford. This includes the Buffalo and King Rivers and extends north along the floodplain to the Murray River.

Groundwater resources in the GMA are managed under a local management plan (the Plan) approved by Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) in 2012.

Annual allocations

Groundwater levels in the Deep Lead of the GMA can be managed if required by restrictions on licensed take and use (or 'annual allocations').

Restrictions were not applied in 2023/24 as the three-year rolling averages (of groundwater recovery levels) were above the trigger levels – refer Figures 1 and 2.

The volume available for take in 2023/24 is 100 per cent of groundwater licence entitlement volume (licence volume) for all management zones (i.e., no restrictions).

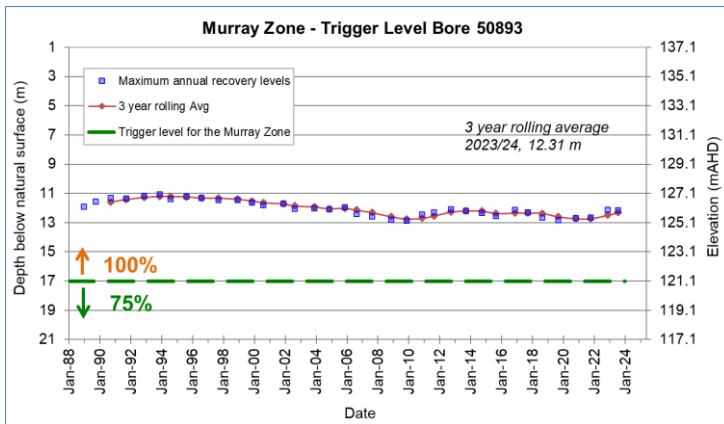


Figure 1. Trigger graph for Murray Zone restrictions

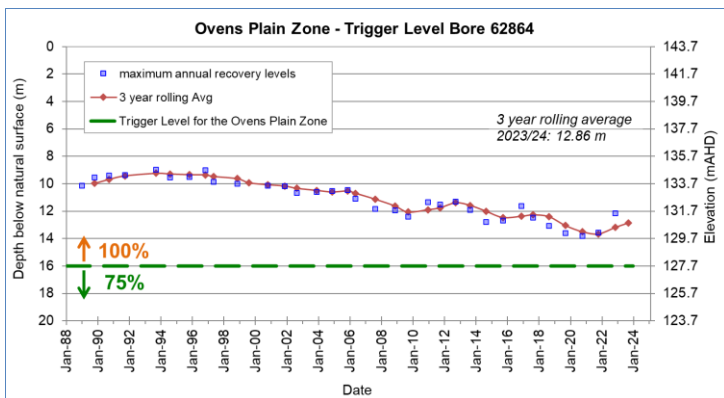


Figure 2. Trigger graph for Ovens Plain Zone restrictions. note: 2023/24 maximum data unavailable.

Groundwater licence volume and use

The total recorded use in the GMA was 6,399.6 ML, or 32 per cent of licence volume (Table 1, Figure 3). This use was fifteen percentage points more than recorded in 2022/23.

Table 1. Licence volume and use for 2023/24

Management zone	Licence volume (ML/yr)	Recorded use (ML)
Bedrock Zone	1,415.6	240.9
Mid Ovens Zone	10,248.3	2396.8
Murray Zone	3,632.0	888.5
Ovens Plain Zone	4,567.1	2,873.4
Total	19,863.0	6,399.6

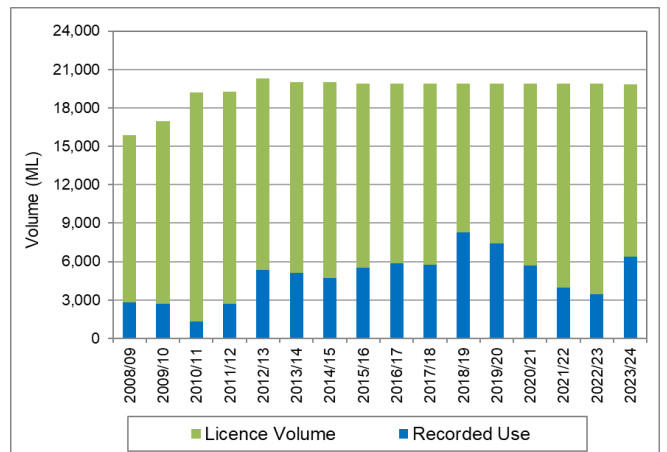


Figure 3. Annual recorded use as a proportion of licence volume

Licence transfers

Licence volume can be transferred between licences in the GMA, on a temporary or permanent basis.

In 2023/24, there was one temporary transfer within the Murray Zone, six within the Ovens Plain Zone, and one to outside the GMA. There was one permanent transfer within the Mid Ovens Zone, two within the Ovens Plain Zone, and two within the Bedrock Zone.

Table 2. Temporary transfers in 2023/24

Management zone	Licence volume transferred from (ML)	Licence volume transferred to (ML)
Ovens Plain Zone	-	896.0
Mid Ovens Zone	216.0	-
Bedrock Zone	-	-
Murray Zone	880.0	200.0
Total	1,096.0	1,096.0

Table 3. Permanent transfers in 2023/24

Management zone	Licence volume transferred from (ML/yr)	Licence volume transferred to (ML/yr)
Ovens Plain Zone	-	59.5
Mid Ovens Zone	63.5	3.0
Bedrock Zone	16.0	11.0
Murray Zone	-	-
Total	79.5	73.5

Licence compliance

In 2023/24, there were no prosecutions or convictions relating to groundwater in the GMA. GMW has a zero-tolerance approach to unauthorised take of non-urban water. Relevant actions, if required, are taken in accordance with GMW’s Risk-Based Compliance and Enforcement Framework. See more information on the GMW website, at www.gmwater.com.au/compliance

Groundwater levels

GMW and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action monitor groundwater levels in State observation bores within the GMA. During 2024, a technical issue has caused a delay in access to some data. For updated groundwater levels and data please visit <https://data.water.vic.gov.au/>

In the Murray Zone during 2023/24, the lowest groundwater levels recorded in the Deep Lead (Calivil Formation) at Brimin was 16.66 m depth below natural surface (DBNS). Groundwater levels were recorded up until April 2024 (Figure 4).

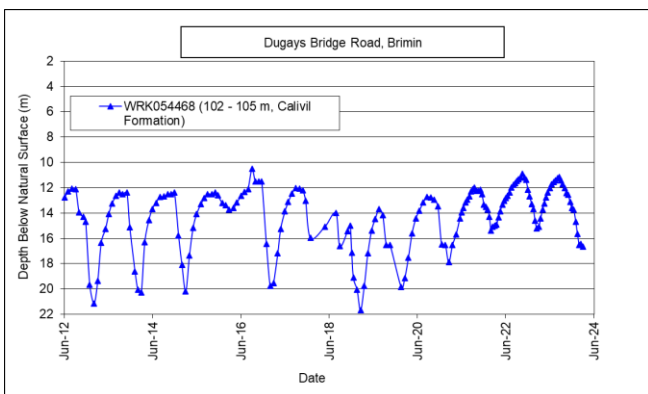


Figure 4. Groundwater level monitoring at Brimin

In the Ovens Plain Zone, groundwater levels in the Calivil Formation at Boorhaman dropped to 18.24 m DBNS in March 2024. (Figure 5).

In the Mid Ovens Zone, groundwater levels declined to 4.22 m DBNS in the Calivil Formation aquifer at Oxley during 2023/24 (Figure 6).

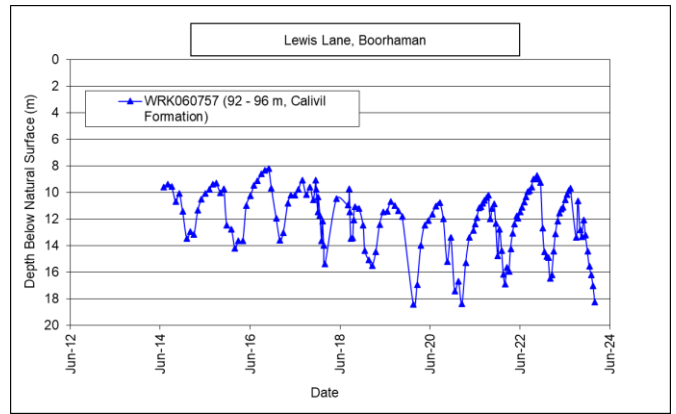


Figure 5. Groundwater level monitoring at Boorhaman

Groundwater levels in the shallow aquifer (Shepparton Formation) bore at the same monitoring site (WRK053427) remained somewhat lower than the deeper bore throughout the year; and there was little variation in the levels (Figure 6).

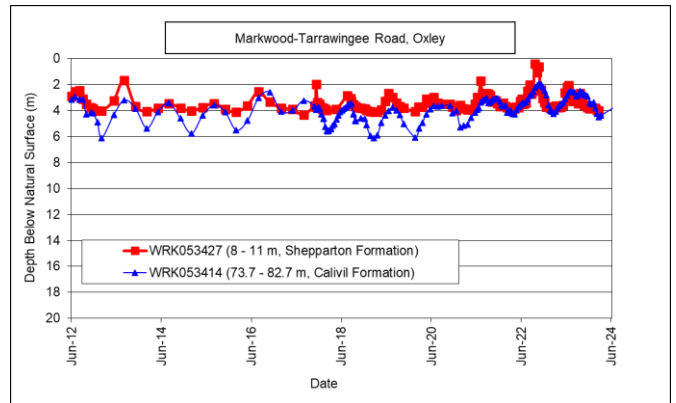


Figure 6. Groundwater level monitoring at Oxley

Groundwater quality

Groundwater salinity recorded for key State observation bores in the GMA have not shown any trends from previous values measured (Figure 7).

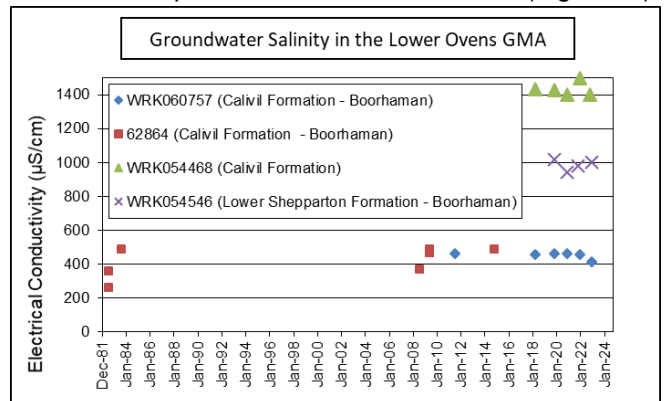


Figure 7. Groundwater salinity monitoring

Where can I get more information?

The Lower Ovens GMA Local Management Plan is available at www.gmwater.com.au, or phone GMW on 1800 013 357.