

## What is the preferred option?



As part of the Goulburn to Murray trade rule review, the Victorian Government is seeking community feedback on the preferred option to better protect the lower Goulburn River, while enabling trade between the Goulburn and Murray systems into the future.

### What is the Victorian Government's preferred option?

#### **Operating rules that set lower, more variable flows over summer and autumn.**

The preferred **operating rules** prescribe variable base flows that provide an average monthly flow of 1,100 ML per day over summer and autumn. They also allow three additional short pulses of water delivery at higher flow rates (with prescribed rates of rise and fall for the changing water level).

These short pulses will rise to 3,000 ML per day, but could go up to 6,000 ML per day and remain within ecological thresholds. Pulses offer greater operational flexibility for moving water in a more natural, variable pattern.

#### **Further investigating moving privately owned pumps in the lower Goulburn to enable more water to be delivered in a sustainable way.**

To enable pulses up to 6,000 ML per day, privately owned pumps located in the channel of the lower Goulburn would need to be moved – we are recommending this is investigated further.

The prescribed average baseflows of 1,100 ML per day over summer and autumn are much lower than those that led to the environmental damage to the lower Goulburn – which were around 2,700 ML per day.

#### **Trade rules that match trade opportunity to what can be delivered under operating rules.**

#### **Tagged use regulations that mean when trade is closed, so too is the ability to move water from the Goulburn to the Murray through tagged arrangements.**

The preferred **trade rule and tagged use restrictions** introduce a two-part allocation trade rule in line with the preferred operating rules, and limit tagged water use in line with this trade rule. Existing commitments to Murray entitlement holders that must be met from the Goulburn will be set aside first at the beginning of each year.

Then trade opportunities will be determined under the proposed trade rule as follows:

- In **winter-spring**, a rolling limit applies (July to mid-December). This allows trade from the Goulburn to the Murray whenever the balance of the Inter-Valley Trade (IVT) account is below 190 GL. During this period, the more water delivered from the IVT account, the greater the opportunity for trade. This reflects the ability to deliver more water in winter and spring when the river is naturally higher.
- In **summer-autumn**, a fixed limit applies to the volume of net trade that can occur from mid-December to June. This volume limit will be announced each year on 15 December and based on the volume of water still able to be delivered, and any additional trade opportunity that can be made based on predicted allocations. This effectively caps trade opportunities for the rest of the year to ensure all traded water can be delivered according to the preferred operating rules for the lower Goulburn River.
- **Throughout the year**, tagged water use is restricted in line with trade limits that apply. This means tagged water use is only possible when allocation trade is possible.

Currently, some people have 'grandfathered' tagged arrangements that are exempt from restrictions. As part of this review we are also proposing to phase these out over time. The proposed approach would transition all grandfathered tags to become subject to the same restrictions as everyone else, whenever there are any changes in ownership or if the amount of water or the place it can be used changes.

### Why is this the preferred option?

The preferred option provides for likely long-term environmental recovery and avoids further environmental damage.

It prescribes a flow regime that recognises ecological thresholds, based the findings of an independent scientific panel, while still supporting trade between the Goulburn and Murray systems.

The two-part trade rule recognises there are different seasonal opportunities to deliver water and ensures delivery risks in the River Murray do not increase as a result of trade from the Goulburn.

It will mean that we can meet existing commitments to Murray entitlement holders from the Goulburn every year. In an average year, around 130 GL of seasonal trade would also be enabled. This could rise to around 200 GL if in-channel pumps are moved to enable larger pulses of water in line with operating rules.

In drier years when seasonal determinations are low and trade is needed most, there will also be more opportunity for trade.

### Making a submission

#### Submissions are open until 30 April 2021.

Stakeholders are invited to make formal submissions or comments on the preferred operating rules, trade rule and tagged use regulations.

More information can be found in our regulatory impact statement on the website:

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/goulburn-murray-trade-rule-review>.

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