



MEDIA RELEASE

WATER TARGET SCHEME ADOPTED

Riverina Water has adopted a water target scheme aimed at improving water supplies.

The key to achieving the water target will be a ban on watering between the hours of 10am and 5pm for all customers.

The ban will remain in place indefinitely.

The decision to impose the ban was made after Riverina Water's Councillors met to consider a report on Wagga's water supply.

The report addressed the drought, low storage levels in Blowering and Burrinjuck Dams, and the stress on groundwater supplies below Wagga. Alternatives to the call for tough restrictions from State water regulators were also considered.

Riverina Water's Chairman, Rod Kendall, was adamant that things had to change in Wagga regarding how water is used.

"There is a lot of competition for the water in the Murrumbidgee Valley," Cr Kendall said. "This drought has severely reduced storages as we all well know. And groundwater supplies are also stressed."

Cr Kendall was pleased with the unanimous support of all Councillors for a much tougher position on water use. "I think all the Councillors recognised that the high water demands of the past are unsustainable. And it is not just in this current drought. Historically the water has been over-allocated. The quantities are just not there."

When asked if Wagga residents' water use makes any real difference, Cr Kendall responded. "Absolutely. The Commonwealth and State Governments are spending billions to restore the Murray-Darling. The State is requesting that we apply severe water restrictions throughout our region and we can expect these to get much tougher. **This needs to be a team effort.** And the customers in Wagga are no different to those in the many other cities with water problems."

Cr Kendall added, "Over-watering creates extra problems right here in our own backyards. There are studies on urban salinity and the impact of new subdivisions in Wagga. This has identified that current levels of lawn and garden watering are unsustainable and need to be substantially reduced to prevent the risk of more salinity problems in Wagga."

The report to Riverina Water County Council recommended the endorsement of a water target scheme for the City of Wagga. The target is aimed at reducing demand by about 20 per cent over 2009-10. This is to be achieved by targeted reductions of 15% in winter, scaling up to a 25% reduction in summer.

Riverina Water General Manager, Gerald Pieper, said there had been some confusion about new water usage targets.

“There has been confusion about restrictions,” Mr Pieper said. “We are not applying restrictions.”

“The target scheme is an alternative to enforced restrictions,” Mr Pieper said.

“To support the target scheme the Council has adopted a permanent ban on watering between 10am and 5pm. This means no customers can have any fixed sprinklers operating during the heat of the day. And this one is not just for Wagga, but for all our customers.”

When asked how Wagga residents were responding so far to the targets, Mr Pieper replied: “It is early days. There are a lot of activities required to get the consumption down ... both by Riverina Water and by our residential and commercial customers in Wagga. This will take time.

“We are implementing a number of measures to help achieve the target. We will start with an advertising campaign. We also plan to promote a range of efficiency practices. When we all have more of these measures in place, and **with our customers working with us, I expect that we will meet our targets.**”

When asked what water customers could do now, Mr Pieper replied: “Residents can start by checking if their automatic watering systems programs are over-watering. Maybe buy a moisture meter. And check if the washing machine is set on the efficient cycle. Buy an efficient shower head. All these actions are low cost and will help get us closer to our targets”.

Cr Kendall believes most Riverina Water **customers are taking steps to reduce usage and with the introduction of the target system this will lead to further significant reduction in usage. “I urge all customers to come on board and work together to reduce usage,”** he said.

Media Contact – Greg Finlayson

Riverina Water County Council PO Box 456 (91 Hammond Avenue) WAGGA WAGGA NSW 2650 Telephone: 02 69220608
