

SUBMISSION: COLIBAN WATER PLAN 2013-2018

This second submission re the Coliban Water Plan for 2013 – 2018 is on behalf of the members of the Coliban Rural Water Users Action Group. The submission follows the release of the final Coliban Water Plan Submission for 2013-18 and the Essential Services Commission Public Forum in Bendigo on November 28. This submission expresses concerns in respect to services and prices.

Thank you,

Committee, Coliban Rural Water Users Action Group

(Barbara Hamilton, Murray Oakes, Col Jensen, Laurie Brown, Barry McPhee)

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Service Concerns

Some customers pay all charges and water does not reach their outlet.

Some customers want their full entitlement and it cannot be delivered.

Supply can be unreliable.

There is no carry-over of water allocations from one season to the next.

Some channels are poorly maintained.

Pricing

Customers with one shared outlet and redistribute water on their properties all pay an outlet fee for the one outlet.

In the Water Plan for 2013-2018 the unmodernised Service Fee- Channel is reduced to \$435, this is a significant reduction. The Volumetric Charge is set at \$236 and the Capacity Charge is now an Infrastructure charge of \$145. Overall this indicates a small reduction in charges for the coming Water Plan period, however it is noted that in the current Water Plan the Capacity Charge increased from \$124 to \$145 and the Volumetric Charge from \$84 to \$236. It is these price increases that forced many licence holders to surrender their licences and will cause other licence holders to do the same.

There is no market for water licences in the Coliban Rural System and relinquishing customers receive no compensation for their licences. As water is bundled it cannot be sold or traded to other systems. Coliban rural customers are financially disadvantaged as water cannot be traded outside the system and licence holders cannot participate in Federal Government buy-back schemes.

In the publication “Our Water Our Future, Regional Action Plan” with a foreword by John Thwaites dated 2004, the section on rural consumption, Action 3.16 says: “To assist the channel reconfiguration process, Coliban Water will enable external trading of rural water entitlements prior to the commencement of the 2006/07 supply season.”

In September 2011 written communication from Peter Walsh the Victorian Water Minister indicated that while there are serious obstacles to be overcome, investigation will continue to see if there can be a reasonable solution. This protracted process continues to financially disadvantage Coliban Rural customers.

As part of the Harcourt Rural Modernisation Project, from October 8 to November 23 2012, licence holders in the Harcourt region had an opportunity to sell licences to Coliban Water for \$1000 or \$2000 a megalitre. During this period no termination fees applied. Rural water licence holders outside the Harcourt region, aware of this Coliban Water offer, express their frustration that the same is not available to them.

Some water resources in the Coliban Water region are controlled and managed by Goulburn Murray Water. Their charges for water supplied to customers in the Coliban region appear to be considerably less than the charges applied by Coliban Water. This appears to be inequitable.

Thank you

Coliban Water Rural Water Users Action Group