

# Cutting the cost of take and use licences

## New arrangements for riparian fencing on Crown frontages

### What's new?

Take and use licence (TUL) fees have been reduced for landholders who fence off Crown frontages on waterways to manage stock access as part of riparian management projects.

Landholders whose land abuts a 'Crown frontage' will not have to pay the application fee for the take and use licence which is required for the purposes of off-stream stock watering. They will have their annual fee waived for three years, as well as being given longer licence periods.

This will save landholders up to \$2100 in total.

### Why is it changing?

Part of the State Government's Waterway Management Program involves providing funding for catchment management authorities (CMAs) to partner with landholders to improve the health of waterways. One of the activities undertaken is encouraging landholders to install a fence to manage stock access to waterways.

However, this means landholders lose direct access to the waterways and the ability to water stock free of charge as well as without the need for a water licence. They may then need to obtain a domestic and stock take and use licence for alternative stock watering purposes. The fees attached to the licence were often a deterrent to landholders getting involved in the riparian projects.

### Riparian management

Riparian land is land abutting waterways. Each year, the State Government's Waterway Management Program invests in riparian protection and improvement projects, through catchment management authorities. Melbourne Water also allocates several million dollars every year to riparian management programs for the broader metropolitan area.

These projects involve CMAs and Melbourne Water working collaboratively with landowners to undertake works such as stock management, fencing, revegetation, weed management and infrastructure to support off-stream stock watering.

Approximately 800km of fencing has been erected along Victoria's rivers each year for the last decade through the program. This has many benefits to the community and landholders such as improved water quality, better stock management, improved vegetation corridors and improved river health.

Many of Victoria's waterways have a 'Crown frontage', a strip of Crown land that runs alongside a waterway. About 30,000 kilometres of Victoria's 170,000 kilometres of riparian land is Crown frontage.

There are almost 10,000 Crown water frontage licences in Victoria, where the land is licensed to the adjoining private landholder, usually for agricultural purposes such as grazing. But more and more of these licences are being converted to be for riparian management purposes to protect the waterway and riparian land.

### More information about the reduced fees

To reduce the take and use licence costs and encourage more landholders with Crown frontages to manage stock access to waterways:

- CMAs will pay the landholder's application fee for the take and use licence as part of the riparian project cost
- Rural water corporations (RWCs) will waive annual fees for the first three years
- Rural water corporations will issue the licence for the current 15-year maximum. Landholders will meet the cost of licence renewal at the end of the 15-year term. This will avoid renewal costs that would apply if the licences were issued for shorter periods and more frequent renewal was needed
- Metering will not be required, which is consistent with the existing policy for domestic and stock take and use licences.

This new approach comes into effect on 1 November 2013, and only applies to new riparian management projects.

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## Why is this good for landholders?

Landholders applying for take and use licences for off-stream stock watering will pay up to \$2,100 less when fencing Crown frontages (depending on which rural water corporation issues their licence) by not paying the application fee or annual fee for three years. Landholders will also save more by paying the renewal fee less often.

Note: in Melbourne Water's region, licences may remain as three-year terms but Melbourne Water does not charge renewal fees so there is no additional cost for landholders due to the renewal process.

## Who does this apply to?

This applies to landholders with Crown frontage. These landholders are eligible if:

- they are undertaking riparian management works in conjunction with their CMA
- they commit to long term management of the riparian land and the works
- they require a take and use licence due to loss of stock access to the waterway due to the installation of a fence

Landholders with freehold frontage have a 'private right' to water and do not need a take and use licence for domestic and stock use.

In many cases, landholders with Crown frontage will not need a new take and use licence as they may be able to supply water to that part of their property from existing water supplies such as a dam. Or they may be able to use an existing take and use licence which they hold to obtain water for other parts of the property.

To be eligible, landholders must be in regions covered by Southern Rural Water, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water, Goulburn Murray Water or Melbourne Water corporations.

Lower Murray Water's region uses a different approach to make sure water entitlements are available to landholders. Contact Mallee CMA for more information.

## How does a landholder obtain the reduced costs?

If a landholder does require a new TUL, the normal application process through the RWC will apply. Typically, the landholder will pay the application fee to the RWC. However, the cost of that fee will be included in the reimbursement back to the landholder by the CMA as part of the riparian works (and clearly documented in the agreement the CMA has with the landholder for the works). However, regional variations in this process may apply.

Landholders should contact their CMA in the first instance to discuss their possible involvement in a riparian management project. The regional rural water corporation can help advise with the process for applying for a take and use licence.

### Catchment management authorities

East Gippsland CMA	5152 0600
West Gippsland CMA	1300 094 262
Corangamite CMA	5232 9100
Glenelg Hopkins CMA	5571 2526
Wimmera CMA	5382 1544
Mallee CMA	5051 4377
North Central CMA	5448 7124
Goulburn Broken CMA	5820 1100
North East CMA	(02) 6043 7600
Melbourne Water*	131 722

### Rural water corporations

Southern Rural Water	1300 139 510
Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water	1300 659 961
Lower Murray Water	5051 3400
Goulburn Murray Water	1800 013 357
Melbourne Water*	131 722

\* Melbourne Water is both the waterway manager undertaking riparian management works and the corporation issuing TULs for the Yarra and lower Maribyrnong rivers. In the rest of the Port Phillip region Melbourne Water is the waterway manager while Southern Rural Water is the licensing authority.

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