

I have enclosed a copy of an article in The Weekly Times last week.

I have heard the argument from some farmers for years that 100% carryover water was introduced in Victoria, as a vehicle for theft by the environment of irrigation farmers allocations.

On our farm no low security water has ever been allocated since it was introduced, even in flood years. After reading this report in The Weekly times, it appears that what these farmers have been saying is correct.

One thing that surprised me last season was the huge volume of water still in the storages at the end of the drought season. In 2002 Waranga Basin was pumped dry to give farmers as much water as possible in that drought season. In the drought season of 2019-2020, Waranga Basin was 60% full at seasons end and we were only allocated 80% High water shares and Zero low.

Eildon was also around 40% full.

It is obvious the environment have huge volumes in Victorian storages carried over to repeat the process next year. When this is combined with a practice that has developed where by water traders carry their water over to manipulate the market, and then sell to irrigators to carryover as insurance against low allocations. It appears huge volumes of our storages are taken up with water that never moves. This ensures allocations are low. The big loser is the irrigator who uses all his allocation on his farm and cannot carryover his own water.

Marieann Westerhoff,

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Huge volumes of water flushed down the Murray to South Australia went to the environment

River flows rob irrigators

By PETER HUNT

EXCLUSIVE

ALMOST 40 per cent of the 2.3 million megalitres of water Victoria and NSW poured across the border into South Australia last season was used for the environment.

South Australian water minister David Speirs has revealed 919,200ML of environmental water was delivered on top of South Australia's monthly entitlement flows, at a time when NSW Murray irrigators had nothing and the market was demanding almost \$1000/ML for those trying to water permanent plantings.

That water was worth \$592 million, based on Aither consulting's recently released volume-weighted average annual price for allocation water below the Barmah choke in 2019-20 season of \$644/ML.

It has come as a painful reminder to NSW and Victorian irrigators that while they suffered through months of uncertainty and low water allocations last season, environmental water managers were flushing huge volumes down the Murray to flood wetlands.

Just 11 months ago, a 3000-strong crowd of dry and thirsty irrigators gathered in Tocumwal to protest the mismanagement of the basin, against a backdrop of a swollen river that was running close to capacity, or "at a banker" as the Murray Darling Basin Authority pushed water through the Barmah Choke to meet environmental and South Australia's needs.

"People feel cheated," said NSW Wakool River Association chairman John Lolicato, who was at last year's protest.

"At last some of these ridiculous numbers are coming



out, which show the environment is the biggest irrigator."

Mr Lolicato said irrigators' confidence in the Murray Dar-

ling Basin Authority and environmental water managers had been completely eroded by the sight of massive environmental flows in the midst of a dry and tough 2019-20 season.

Figures released by Mr Speirs' office and the MDBA's live river data show:

1.68 MILLION megalitres of the South Australian cross-border flow reached the lower Murray's Blanchetown weir, known as Lock One.

ONCE past Blanchetown, much of the 1.68 million megalitres was lost to evaporation, given Adelaide, industrial

users and a relatively small number of Lower Murray irrigators consume 200,000ML to 260,000ML annually.

OF the remaining 1.42-1.48 million megalitres pooling in South Australia's Lower Lakes, just 677,000ML passed through the barrages into the Murray Mouth and sea.

In comparison to the South Australian environmental water usage, Victoria's irrigation communities used: **511,000ML** in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation Districts. **ALMOST** 600,000ML in the Lower Murray irrigation system.

Smokescreen in resetting of fire-danger ratings

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"I don't believe the extent of impact on peoples' homes and livelihood would be generally considered 'acceptable'.

"The level of risk should not just be determined by a government agency based on what seems achievable given a certain level of resources."

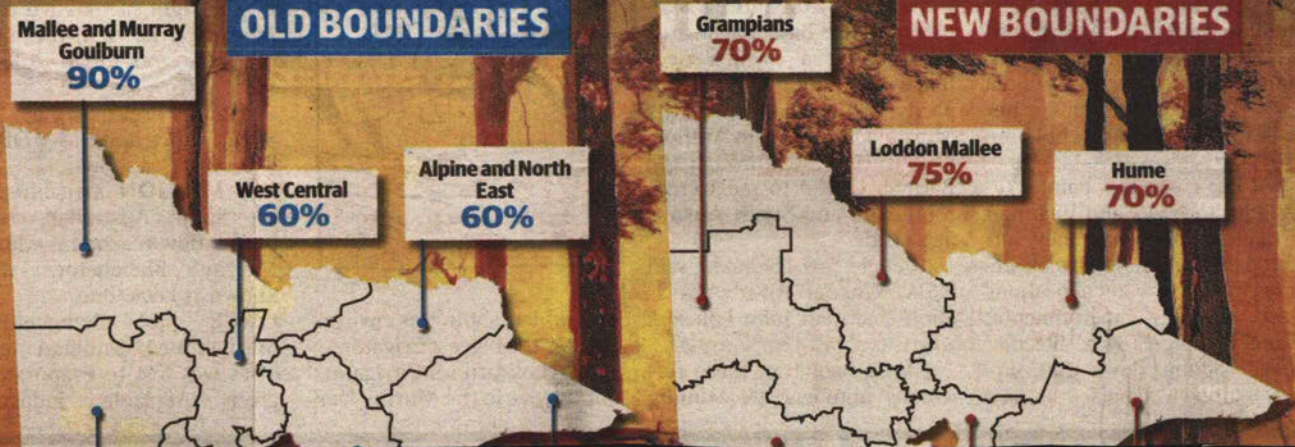
A risk level of 100 per cent equates to no fuel reduction burns being conducted at all, resulting in impacts of a fire with maximum fuel loads.

Redrawing the boundaries has also allowed FFMVic to split Victoria's highest risk East Central bushfire zone between three new lower risk zones, Port Phillip, Hume and Gippsland.

The internet archives show that in 2018 FFMVic stated that in the East Central Zone: "fuel management activities in the FOP (fire operations plan)

FUELLING THE FIRE

Target risk levels: old versus new



"The Gippsland Region (previously reported as Alpine and Greater Gippsland BRL) has gone up because of the addition of the Latrobe District from the East Central BRL".

FFMVic, Premier Daniel Andrews and his senior ministers have repeatedly refused to release a full set of fuel-load maps for Victoria's bushfire zones, first stating in the lead-up to last summer's catastrophic fire season that they were only for internal "business" use, and then more recently claiming they could be used by arsonists.

Until the Andrews Government was elected in 2014, both the former Baillieu-Napthine Coalition and Brumby Labor governments had committed to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's recommendation to "fund and