



Mildura Rural City Council

Water Management Policy

Policy – CP024

| Prepared | Reviewed | Approved | Date | Council Minute No. |
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| Energy & Water Innovation Officer | Environmental Sustainability Coordinator | Council | January 2023 | 2023/0019 |
| Trim File: 18/02/01 | | To be reviewed: January 2025 | | |
| Document Owner: Manager Community Futures | | Review Frequency: 3 yearly | | |

1. The purpose of this policy is

To provide a strategic framework for the management and security of Council's water resources.

2. Policy Statement

Our Community Vision 2021-2040 includes a vision statement for the environment of 'We will sustain and enhance our natural environment and resources for current and future generations'. The responsible use of water resources and ensuring security of supply is critical to the long-term sustainability of the local community.

Key considerations in the management and security of Council's water resources are the social and economic implications. These include the provision of green spaces to support both passive and active recreational opportunities and contribute to overall community health and wellbeing; and the provision of high quality public spaces, gardens and amenity to encourage civic pride and attract visitors to the Mildura region.

Council is committed to demonstrating environmental best practice when delivering services to the community, including the management of water resources.

3. Principles

Water security

Water security is critical in ensuring Council can deliver quality urban landscapes that are resilient, sustainable and meet community expectations.

Potable town water supplies are subject to urban water restrictions during drought periods. This can have a significant impact on both public and domestic gardens and open space during drought periods and extended water restrictions.

Raw water allocations sourced through Lower Murray Water (LMW) are subject to water allocations. During periods of drought, Council parks, gardens and open space irrigated by raw water are subject to reduced irrigation scheduling based on available water allocations. All Council sport fields and many larger grassed areas including the Mildura Riverfront are irrigated with raw water within the LMW water district.

To safeguard for drought periods and support growth Council will purchase additional permanent water share (raw water) to maintain carryover water and increase allocation capacity during dry years. Council will aim to increase its allocation by 20% over 10 years by purchasing 300 megalitres of water. This budget allocation will be considered annually as part of the Capital Works Program and dependent on available budget.

Council will pursue options with LMW and Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water to switch sites irrigated with potable water to raw water as well as opportunities for delivering raw water to irrigated areas in new developments. This will aid in reducing water costs, demand on potable water supply and exposure to water restrictions during dry periods.

Water conservation

Council is a significant water user within the community, with responsibility for irrigating parks, sporting fields, public gardens and public open spaces, as well as using water for other Council operations.

In addition, as the local planning authority, Council is in a unique position to be able to influence public attitude and behaviour regarding water use and to set standards for water conservation in new developments.

Council will incorporate best practice and innovative water conservation measures on council managed land to reduce water usage. These measures include but are not limited to:

- Use of raw water on green spaces where possible.
- Water capture and re-use systems.
- Water efficient appliances and equipment.
- Central irrigation control systems.
- Soil moisture monitoring technology for green spaces.
- Other smart technologies to minimise water consumption.

Water sensitive urban design

The natural water cycle is impacted by buildings and sealed surfaces. As a result, natural water flows are altered and stormwater is created. This stormwater carries pollution into our waterways and can cause local flooding during heavy rainfall events.

Water sensitive urban design (WSUD) is the design of buildings, subdivisions and works to minimise the impact of development on the surrounding environment and waterways. WSUD involves treating and reducing stormwater flows, increasing soil moisture, urban greening and providing an alternative water source.

The local environment is semi-arid with low levels of rainfall, extreme temperatures and high evaporation rates. WSUD needs to be considered in the context of this environment requiring unique design solutions that suit the local climate.

Council will incorporate best practice WSUD into planning and landscape design to re-use stormwater on land maintained by Council in urban environments, stopping it from reaching our waterways by mimicking the natural water cycle as closely as possible. WSUD treatment options include but are not limited to:

- Swales.
- Wetlands.
- Rain gardens.
- Sediment ponds.
- Rainwater tanks.

Sustainable landscapes

Water consumption is an important consideration in the development of a sustainable landscape. Council is committed to ensuring landscape water consumption is minimised by:

- Selecting plants species appropriate to the local climate and environment, that is, those that are resilient, require little water and are drought tolerant, with a preference for indigenous plant species.
- Minimising the amount of grassed areas by incorporating mulched low water use gardens where possible. For example, neighborhood parks will be designed with a minimum of 60% mulched area / low water use garden area and maximum of 40% turf (60/40 concept).
- Using mulch to reduce evaporation and increase water availability.
- Using tree wells for street tree plantings, where possible, to direct water to the root system and minimise water run off.
- Ensuring the most water efficient irrigation practices are being implemented.

Climate adaptation

Climate change is impacting our communities through warmer temperatures, reduced but more intense rainfall, and more severe droughts, dust storms, heat waves and bush fires. Climate change is also putting increasing pressure on our assets and services.

In February 2020, Mildura Rural City Council declared a state of climate change emergency requiring urgent action by all levels of government.

Council will consider climate impacts such as increasing temperatures, less but more intense rainfall and declining water quality when making water management decisions. Education of staff, developers and the community will remain critical when adapting to climate change.

4. Implementation

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5. Definitions

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| Climate Change | Long-term shift in local, regional and global climate patterns. |
| Climate change adaptation | Efforts to prepare for the actual or expected changes in the climate in order to minimise harm, act on opportunities or cope with the consequences of climate change. |
| Efficiency | Use of the least amount of a resource possible to achieve the required outcome. |
| Indigenous plant species | Plant species that grow naturally in the local area. |
| Resource consumption | The consumption of raw materials to sustain our lives. |
| Sustainable landscape | A landscape that meets the needs of the present and future generations. |
| Water sensitive urban design | An approach to planning and designing urban areas to make use of stormwater and reduce the harm it causes to our rivers and creeks. |

6. Legislation and other references

6.1 Legislation

For further information related to this policy see:

- *Water Act 1989;*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987;*
- *Climate Change Act 2017.*

6.2 Documents

This Policy is implemented in conjunction with the following documents:

- Towards Zero Emissions Strategy 2021-2050;
- Native Vegetation Plan 2020-2024;
- Environmental Education Plan 2020-2024;
- Public Open Space Strategy;
- Urban Tree Strategy 2021-2026;
- Urban Forest Strategy (in development);
- Recreation Strategy 2021-2031;
- Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Policy – CP041;
- Water and Energy Use Policy – OP186;
- Water Allocation Policy – CP023;

- Urban Tree Policy – CP021;
- Urban Nature Strip Policy – CP068;
- CBD Plan 2020-2035;
- Water and Energy Use Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities;
- Sustainable Water Use at Mildura Rural City Council;
- Constructed Wetland Management Guidelines.

6.3 Risk Assessment Reference

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| Risk Category | ✓ | Risk Category | ✓ |
| Asset Management | ✓ | Financial Sustainability | ✓ |
| Committees | | Human Resource Management | |
| Compliance – Legal & Regulatory | ✓ | Leadership & Organisational Culture | |
| Contract Management | | Occupational Health & Safety | |
| Contract Tendering & Procurement | ✓ | Organisational Risk Management | ✓ |
| Corporate Governance | | Project Management | |
| Environmental Sustainability | ✓ | Public Image and Reputation | ✓ |