

Water in a Dry Land

Water resources

Although Victoria is relatively well-watered compared to other parts of Australia, it is still prone to variability of rainfall and hence water supplies. Areas in the north and west of Victoria have lower rainfall and greater variability of rainfall than eastern parts of the state. River basins used by Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo are located in drier parts of the state.

Climate change

A feature of predicted climate change is an increase in high temperatures and variability. Such changes will have impacts on water supplies and therefore highlight the need to use water resources more efficiently.

Drought

Drought presents a risk to water supplies. Because of this water managers have mechanisms such as water restrictions which aim to deal with the impacts of severe drought. In the longer term, more efficient use of water resources can be seen as a way of dealing with natural climatic variability.

Water use

Water can be consumed directly or can be used for productive purposes such as agriculture. It also has value as a recreational resource and is important for maintaining natural ecosystems.

Irrigated agriculture uses the majority of Victoria's water resource to produce food and other commodities. Domestic and industrial sectors are significant consumers of water.

An integrated picture of Water in a Dry Land

Water quality

Urban development and agricultural practices can increase the risk of water quality problems. Stream water quality tends to be higher in those parts of Victoria that have not experienced wide scale clearing or development. These are generally in the eastern parts of the state.

Changing practices

Pressures of drought have challenged water managers and consumers to develop more efficient water use patterns. For domestic users, rebate schemes have been introduced to provide incentives for wise water use and recycling has become more common. Irrigators have increasingly changed their practices to gain more value from the water they use. Water trading has also been introduced to encourage more efficient use of irrigation water.