



Municipal Infex

August 2005

Volume 2 Issue 1.

COMING EVENTS

August

- NAP, NHT, Second Generation Landcare Approvals
- Community Salinity Grants Call for Projects
- 5 Bush Returns, Expressions of Interest Close.
- 11-12 Smart Septics Road Show, Shepparton
- 15-19 National Landcare Week
- 17. MCC Steering Committee, Moira Shire.

September

- Envirofunds, Call for Projects Biodiversity Month
- 7 & 8 DPI Conference "Linking the Sciences of Research and Extension". Bendigo.
- 8 Closing date for comments on Kanyapella Wetland Management Plan.
- 21 "Catchment Partners-Making Links Between Environment and Water" seminar, DPI, Tatura.

October

- 4 Closing date 1st round Community Water Grants
- 11-14. 4th Victorian Flood

Local Government & Water Reform. Trading Environmental Unbundling Reconfiguration

Municipal councils are being asked to play a crucial role in "reconfiguration" - the rationalisation of Goulburn Murray Water's irrigation system in the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

Details of the plans, which are the latest stage of the water reform process, were outlined to local government delegates at a recent workshop in Echuca.

Project leaders from Goulburn Murray Water, Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries told delegates new legislation would "free up some of the legal obstacles which G-M Water has had to adhere to", including elements of duty of supply, to allow rationalisation of the irrigation system which is "tired, dilapidated and, in some cases, redundant".

Presenters were keen to emphasise positive outcomes, which include reduced costs, improved viability and reliability and being able to adapt the supply infrastructure to reflect changes in demand.

Channels which currently "don't pay their way" might be offered to councils or other groups for semi-privatisation.

Some uneconomic channels will be closed down. When that happens, separate arrangements will be put in place for stock and domestic water supplies.

Reconfiguration is also aiming to achieve 25,000 megalitres in water savings which must be delivered to government in 2009. The trade-off includes additional funding of \$6 million for infrastructure planning and \$50 million for irrigation works.

Reconfiguration, which is outlined in the government white paper, "Securing Our Water Future Together", has kept a low profile to date because of the need to "clarify a wide range of issues and develop answers" before going to a wider audience.

Regional local government and Catchment Management Authorities, which are seen as essential partners in reconfiguration, are among the first to be consulted in detail.

The five year Reconfiguration Plan will be carried out in several stages, commencing with a G-M Water Strategic Overview.



Local government delegates attending a seminar in Echuca on 29 July about "Reconfiguration".

Area Infrastructure Plans will be developed for each customer service area, eg: Central Goulburn, to identify the sequence and priorities of works. Each area will be broken up into "pods" - described as a group of typically 20-40 properties with a common stake in the water system.

Some pods will have rationalisation plans which can be implemented in agreement with stakeholders. If agreement cannot be reached, a Reconfiguration Plan will be developed as part of a formal process of implementation, subject to ministerial approval.

Local government is expected to be involved in negotiations at regional and local levels.

Reconfiguration, water trading, environmental water flows and unbundling of water rights make up the reform process which is bringing revolutionary change to irrigation. Not only farmers are being affected.

Local government rate revenue is already feeling the impact of reduced property values brought about by permanent water trading. This will be accelerated when "unbundling" of water rights (into separate High and Lower Security Water Shares, Delivery Shares and Water-Use Licenses) occurs on July 1 next year.

In one irrigation region shire, a six percent "across the board" increase in rates would be necessary to

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Local Area Plans. COGS to host SIRIC	2
Barmah-Millewa Plan GBCMA- Local Government Environment Officers Forum BioDiversity Action Plans	3
Local Sustainability Smart Septics Roadshow	4
Joint NRM Inductions Irrigation Decisions	5
Social Landscapes	6
New Municipal Catchment Coordinator	7
Catchment Partners Unbundling Road Show Flood Conference Kanyapella Wetland Plan On-Line papers	8

(Continued on page 7)

GBCMA & Local Government Partnership Forum

The Goulburn Broken CMA is to hold a high-level conference with local government following municipal elections in November.

Councilors and senior staff from throughout the catchment will be invited to attend the one-day seminar with GBCMA board members and program managers.

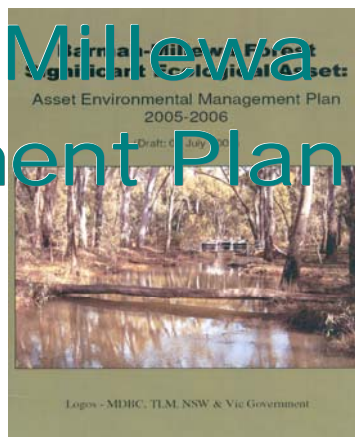
The conference will be an opportunity for new and re-elected councilors to update on issues related to the catchment management strategy.

The meeting will also stress the importance of the partnership between the CMA and local government.

Time will also be set aside for general discussion of environmental and other issues regarding the relationship between the CMA and local government.

A draft agenda will be circulated when a date has been set.

Barmah-Millewa Environment Plan



The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority says the recently released Barmah-Millewa Environmental Management Plan will provide for improved management of environmental water flows to achieve a sustainable outcome for the famous wetland.

However, Chief Executive Officer, Bill O'Kane, says the plan in its present form is too tightly focussed on water management and must be expanded to address land management issues that threaten the wetland environment, such as grazing and logging.

"GBCMA is committed to a systems approach for Barmah-Millewa, managing the forest and its tributaries for biodiversity.

"There is no point spending over half a billion dollars in environmental water flows if other issues, such as pest plants and animals, erosion, logging, grazing and recreation are not addressed.

"Environmental flows must be linked to ecological outcomes. The Living Murray process compels us to achieve a positive environmental outcome and that is what we must do."

"The Barmah-Millewa Wetland is the most significant environmental asset in our catchment and must be managed for its biodiversity. This is not optional."

Mr O'Kane said community consultation during development of the plans had been "satisfactory, considering the very tight timelines imposed by the Living Murray process".

GBCMA does not endorse the proposed community engagement process discussed at a meeting in Moama on July 7.

"Our view is that we must integrate Barmah into our current community engagement processes and not duplicate existing community structures."

Further talks will be held with Murray CMA, DSE and NSW Forests to establish the framework for future community consultation processes for the Barmah-Millewa plan.

Goulburn Broken Environmental Officers' Forum

A regional forum for municipal environmental officers to discuss natural resource management issues is to be set up in the Goulburn Broken catchment.

Similar groups in the North East and North Central CMA regions have been successful for exchanging information and ideas about environmental issues and activities.

Coordination of policies, projects and funding submissions is also considered.

Meetings are often held on a specific theme, such as the North East's Firewood Management Strategies and alignment with Regional Catchment Strategies.

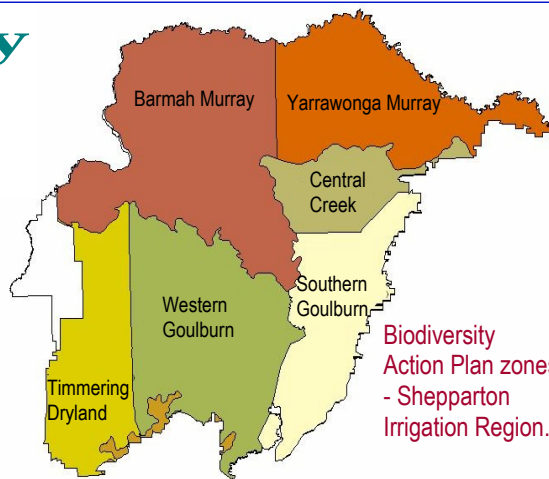
The first meeting of the Goulburn Broken Environment Officers' Forum will be held in early September.

Invitations setting the date and venue will soon be sent to all municipalities.

Biodiversity Action Planning

A new program to map significant areas of native biodiversity and develop action plans for their protection is progressing throughout the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

Biodiversity Action Planning is part of Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy and is being carried out by the GBCMA through



DPI and DSE.

There are six BAP zones in the Goulburn Broken component of the irrigation area and two more fall under the North Central CMA.

Each zone will have an environmental management plan developed, with draft reports scheduled for completion by the end of September.

Further information: Rebecca Heard, DPI Echuca, 5482 1922.

What is a “Local Sustainability Accord”?

Local Sustainability Accords are formal agreements between the State Government and each municipality in Victoria to develop strategies for environmental sustainability.

The accords are an initiative of the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) and Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE).

Two series of workshops were held at regional centres including Shepparton, Bendigo and Benalla, to discuss sustainability issues.

Priorities ranged from natural resource management to establishing new community identities, demonstrating the breadth of the community’s definition of “sustainability”.

If the environmental accords are a success, there are suggestions they could be expanded to include wider social and economic sustainability issues.



Workshops in regional areas often had quite different views about what makes for “sustainability” than workshops in metropolitan areas.

DSE has recommended regional offices be set up to coordinate the process.

Additional funding might also be available for councils without the resources to develop their own plans.

In a joint submission on the draft report, Victoria’s regional catchment management authorities expressed concern the environmental sustainability accords could duplicate existing resources, such as regional catchment strategies.

The same concern was raised at a number of the regional workshops.

The CMA’s also expressed concern the accord process had progressed so far without formal reference to or inclusion of the CMA’s.

Accords are one of the topics to be covered at the proposed partnership conference between GBCMA and local municipalities after the 2005 elections. Delegates to the workshop will get an update on progress of the accord’s process and expected implementation.

The accord is being developed under the guidance of the Victorian Local Sustainability Committee, which is made up of MAV, Environs Australia, Victorian Local Governance Association, Metropolitan Environment Forum, Local Governments for Sustainability and DS&E.

Smart Septics

The “Smart Septics Roadshow” will be in Shepparton for a two day training workshop for local government, water authorities, government agencies and CMA’s on August 11 and 12.

The roadshow is an MAV project intended to improve the local government’s ability to manage domestic waste water.

The emphasis is on providing solutions to the many wastewater issues identified by Municipal Environmental Health Officers.

Shepparton is the first of five workshops to be held around the state.

The workshop will start with the launch of the Smart Septics Community Education Kits, Information Management Guidelines and web resources.

This will be followed by a “solutions workshop”, which is to encourage information exchange and feedback from participants.

The remaining one-and-a-half days will be spent in detailed training sessions designed for Environmental Health and other local government officers directly involved in domestic wastewater management planning.

The morning launch and workshop is free, with a \$50 fee for the full training sessions.

Registrations for the Shepparton workshop close on 4 August. Further information: Nina Keath, 9667 5554 nina@clearwater.asn.au

Nominations have been called for the Shepparton Irrigation Region Landcare Award.

The award seeks to recognise a volunteer who has worked tirelessly for their Landcare group, so there is no shortage of candidates.

A two night accommodation package at Hepburn Springs Motor Inn, with free entry to a number of local attractions, is the prize.

The award is open to voluntary members of Landcare groups in the Shepparton Irrigation Region. Nominations close on Friday 14th of October.

Further information and nomination forms are available from Julie Engstrom, Community Liaison Officer, DPI Tatura, 5833 5355, julie.engstrom@dpi.vic.gov.au



Joint Inductions: Getting to Know You

GBCMA is considering a proposal to set up an induction program for new staff employed in natural resource management roles by local government, agencies and the CMA.

The one-day, one-stop seminar would inform and update staff about natural resource management in the region: how it works, who does what, and how the various partnership roles work.

People attending might be new staff engaged in roles where they need an understanding of natural resource management in the region.

Staff might come from councils,

CMA's, government agencies, water authorities and even interested members of community groups, such as Landcare and Local Area Planning.

A separate induction process could be set up for re-elected councilors to update them on the latest issues in resource management, particularly the regional catchment management strategy.

Inductions would be a valuable introduction to environment management issues and a chance to meet and establish contact with others involved in the increasingly complex processes.

Each stakeholder group would be invited to make a presentation about their activities, issues and priorities.

A major element of the program would be to outline the funding process - where funds come from, how priorities are set, what makes an effective application and the reporting requirements.

Partnership groups will soon be asked for comments on this idea and to make suggestions for what should be included in the induction process.

Comments can be sent to the S.I.R. Municipal Catchment Coordinator, Colin James.

For on-line information about threatened plants, animals and ecological communities, go to the Species Profile & Threats (SPRAT) database on:
www.deh.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/sprat.pl

Earth's ten hottest years on record have occurred since 1990.

In 1920, there were 20 Victorians for every farm.
By 1970, the ratio had risen to over 50.
In 2005, there are 175 Victorians for every farm, with the figure expected to rise to more than 350 by 2030.

10% of Australia's farms produce more than 50% of the nation's agricultural produce. They also account for most of the growth in agricultural productivity.

Only 6% of Australia's land mass is arable. 35% of our land generates no rainfall runoff at all.

Recycling one aluminium can saves enough energy to power a TV set for 3 hours.

In the 1600's, hat-makers who used mercury to treat felt and fur were found to be acting strangely, hence the term "mad as a hatter". It was caused by mercury's cumulative affect on our nervous system.

80% of Australia's flowering plants, mammals, reptiles and frogs are found nowhere else on earth, along with most of our fish and almost half the birds.

At least 18 exotic animal species have established feral populations in Australia. Cats and foxes alone are responsible for the extinction of more than 30 native species.

Two mature trees can supply the oxygen needs for one person for an entire year.

You have more statistical chance of dying from an asteroid colliding with Earth than in an earthquake

The Right Irrigation Decision - First Time

Choosing the best irrigation method for their farm is one of the most important, and expensive, decisions a farmer will make.

Their choice will set the direction of their farming practices for years to come and will commit them to many thousands of dollars, so it is important they make the best decision possible.

The Department of Primary Industries is developing a useful tool to assist them to do just that.

The "Framework for Irrigation Selection & Design" has been developed in consultation with irrigation designers, farm consultants, irrigators, DPI extension, CMA and project staff to provide a step-by-step analysis of which irrigation method is best suited to

their particular application.

It prompts decision-makers to answer questions about the issues involved with each irrigation method, which are then tested against what the farmer wants to achieve.



The aim is to ensure farmers make informed decisions about an irrigation method best suited to their application, thereby reducing chances of spending time

and money on a system that may not be the best for them.

Using the tool, farmers work through all issues associated with each irrigation method to be sure they have considered all aspects of their decision. The project developing the "Framework for Irrigation Selection & Design" is now in its final stages.

Our Changing Social Landscapes

The Department of Primary Industry is considering its future role in a community facing rapid structural change.

DPI's Strategic Policy section is investigating how the department can best function in communities which are undergoing radical transformations, often as a result of population movements caused by declining terms of trade or by people moving from the city in search of a rural lifestyle.

What is clear is that many areas which rely almost solely on "traditional" agriculture, are in serious decline, while those offering high amenity values and convenient access to major centres, are booming.

It is also clear that irrigation is one key to success but that too is undergoing major change as a result of water reforms and permanent water trading.

Many social, economic and environmental issues arise from the rapid change and DPI is trying to work out what the future might look like and how it can best service the new look communities that are emerging.

A DPI discussion paper on the issues has noted four distinct types of social landscapes in Victoria.

Agricultural Production

- Largely reliant on agricultural income.
- Farmers must improve productivity and get bigger to

keep up with declining terms of trade.

- Land values declining, most sales to locals.
- Populations ageing and declining.
- Rates base declining.
- Ageing infrastructure.
- Loss of services and skills.
- Smaller towns often in decline.

Rural Amenity

- Diversified incomes, not as reliant on agriculture.
- Populations increasing, largely as a result of people moving into the area seeking a rural lifestyle

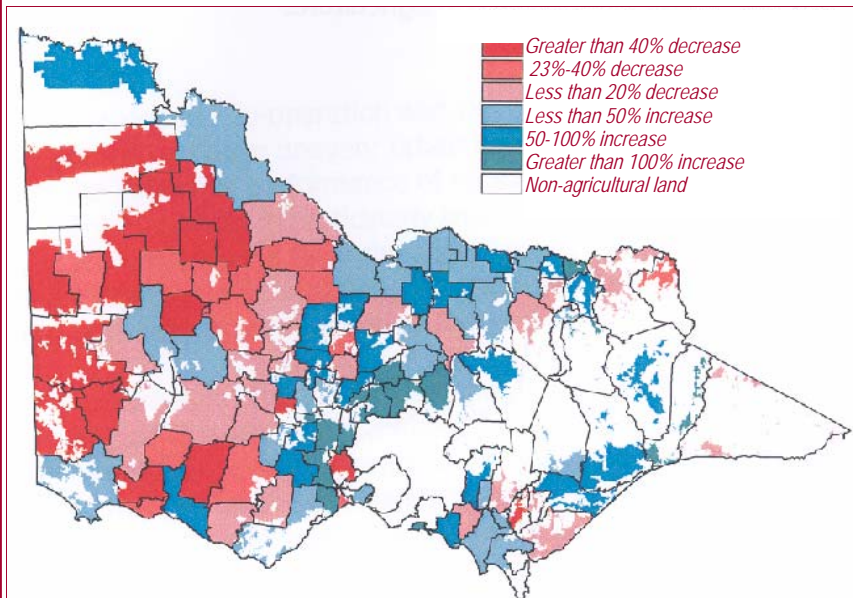
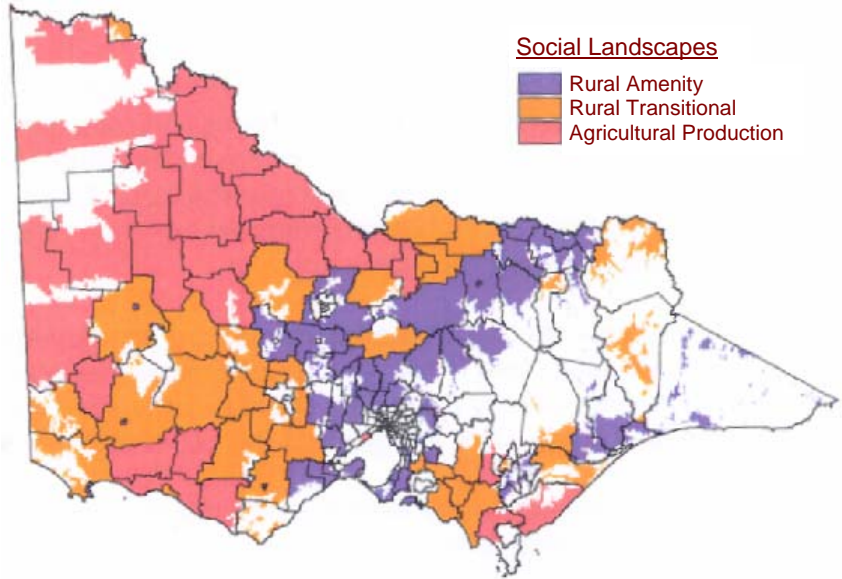
• Most land sales to "outsiders", who are changing the complexion of communities.

• Competition for amenable land is increasing land values, increasing pressure on agriculture.

- Land use changing from agriculture.
- Farm sizes trending smaller/ more intensive/specialised, often with off-farm income.

Rural Transitional

- Half way between the first two.
- Agriculture forced to change to keep pace with declining terms of trade.
- Changing land use - more intensive.
- Some migration into area to take advantage of lower housing costs is not always welcome, but is helping to replace ageing farm population.
- Cultural changes caused by migration



% Change in population from 1961-2001.

Showing how population decline tends to be concentrated in areas which primarily depend on agricultural production. Population increases tend to be in areas with good amenity and convenient access (Hume and Calder corridors) or with high amenity values (coastlines and rivers).

(Continued on page 7)

....Our Changing Social Landscapes

- not all welcomed.
- Uncertain future for small towns without some “unique” identity.

Irrigated Landscapes.

- Stable or increasing populations and land values.
- Considerable uncertainty arising from water reforms.
- Water trading accelerating rate of structural change
- Amenity locations in high demand.
- Cost of water affecting local terms of trade.
- Lots of irrigated farms selling water and converting to dry.

Whatever future DPI might have, the department is

(Continued from page 1)

make up for lost revenue. Shires are well aware of the issues and have been investigating other ways of retaining revenue.

The Echuca workshop was told regions which are nett importers of water are highly supportive of the reforms, while nett exporters are “suspicious and anxious”.

Those in favour argue “many positive benefits arising from greater flexibility, allowing irrigators to tailor their water use, service levels and capital commitments to their actual requirements”.

Those against are concerned about the economic and social impacts of permanent water being traded away from their region.

Unbundling of water rights, is being outlined in a series of seminars currently being held around the region.

Water and Delivery Shares will be tradeable commodities.

Water-Use Licenses will be permanently attached to each land parcel having authority to irrigate and will not be tradeable. Each license will have an upper-use limit based on the greater of the previous water allocation or the highest volume used on the property.

If a property is not irrigated for ten years, its Water-Use License will expire.

Conditions on water-use licenses are currently based on minimum standards, but may be subject to review by Catchment Management Authorities if environmental objectives are not being met.

Another impact of water trading has been the reduction in sales water. In the past, water authorities could offer 100% sales (water permitting), knowing only about half would be actually taken up. However, with water trading leading to higher utilization, it is estimated future sales (lower security) offerings will be reduced by 40% or more.

Goulburn Murray Water’s point of contact for local government enquiries on reconfiguration is Mr Kevin Preece, (03) 5871 0100, kevinp@g-mwater.com.au.

Members of the team conducting community briefings on unbundling are also available to address small groups, including councils. For details, see “Unbundling Road Show” on Page 8.

aware it is inextricably linked with its partners, including local government. Any new strategies will need to consider other partners and their available resources.

Among strategies recommended for government to deal with the changing landscape are:

- Strengthen capacity to respond to change in rural Victoria
- Reduce regional barriers to development of new industry
- Establish new partnerships to protect and improve rural amenity
- Support rural communities to anticipate and respond to change.

The DPI project is submitting its first report at the end of August, with a strategy to be released for public comment later in the year.

Municipal Catchment Coordinator - Home Again

As if to prove the wheel of life goes full circle, the original Municipal Salinity Liaison Officer is back on the job.

Colin James, who held the first liaison position from 1990-94, took over as Municipal Catchment Coordinator on April 26, replacing Melva Ryan, who was filling the post on a temporary basis.



Colin spent the past ten years in far north Queensland as a contract broiler chicken grower.

Among the many changes since Colin left have been local government amalgamations and evolution of the salinity management plan into a regional catchment strategy.

Colin says there are some things about the job which haven’t changed much at all.

“My role is still essentially the same: to represent local government in the CMA processes and make sure everyone knows what the other is up to.

“To do that, I need a strong working relationship with each of the councils. I need to know their issues and priorities so I can be sure the local government point of view is included when decisions are being made at the various CMA forums.”

Colin is based at the Department of Primary Industries in Ferguson Road, Tatura. Telephone 5833 5244, 0418 561679. Email: colinj@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Edited by Colin James
Municipal Catchment Coordinator
Goulburn Broken CMA
Phone: (03) 5822 5244
Fax: (03) 5833 5971
Mobile: 0418 561679
colinj@gbcma.vic.gov.au

Providing information exchange between municipalities and the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

Eye halve a spell ling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plain lee marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
Eye strike a kea and tie par word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the 'er or rite
Its rare lea Eva wrong.
Eye have run this Poe em threw it
I yam shore your pleas do no
Its let a perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.
-Sauce un no en

4th Victorian Flood Management Conference

City of Greater Shepparton and the GBCMA are to host the 4th Victorian Flood Management Conference in October.

The four day conference from October 11 to 14 will showcase the latest research on a theme of 'Prevention, Response and Recovery'.

This bi-annual conference has Australian and international delegates from private and public sectors including researchers, consultants, all tiers of government, floodplain managers, emergency and community services, engineers and urban planners, catchment and natural resource managers, landholders and students.

Further information is at: <http://www.vicfloodconference.com.au/>

Catchment Partners - Making Links.

Invitations are being sent to all GBCMA partners in the Shepparton Irrigation Region for the annual update on key issues and activities in the Regional Catchment Strategy.

The theme is: "Making Links Between the Environment Water".

Outlines will be given on salt disposal, benefits of stream health, the Barmah - Millewa management plan, environmental water allocations and long-awaited outcomes and implications of the recent VCAT panel hearing on Murray Valley Drain 11.

Conference room, DPI Tatura at 10.15am on Wednesday 21 September.

"Unbundling" Road Show

The G-M Water and DSE team which has been running seminars throughout the Shepparton Irrigation Region on the unbundling of water rights, is available to meet with other groups, including councils, to outline details of the unbundling process.

Meetings can be organised through:

Naomi Douglas,
DSE Project Officer,
9637 8540, 0407 747728

WSUD Conference Papers

50 research papers from the 2004 International Water Sensitive Urban Design Conference held in Adelaide last year are now available on-line.

Papers covering a wide range of subjects including planning, groundwater, swale drainage, WSUD life cycles and costs, water demand, greywater, stormwater and community engagement are available on www.wsud.org/literature.htm

Kanyapella Plan for Comment

The draft plan for the Kanyapella Basin Wildlife Management Area is now available for technical comment.

Closing date for comments is September 8.

37 recommendations are made in the draft report, covering:

- Reserve Status & Management
- Water Regime
- Environmental Water Allocation
- Water Quality
- Land Use
- Community Involvement

- Cultural Heritage
- Salinity & Groundwater
- Grazing
- Fire Hazard
- River Red Gum & Block Box Vegetation
- Pest Plants & Animals
- Threatened Plants
- Wetland Seeding & Vegetation.
- Native Wildlife
- Ecological Surveys & Research.

Copies of the draft plan are available from DPI, Tatura.



Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
55 Welsford St., Shepparton
P. O. Box 1752
Shepparton 3632
(03) 5822 2288



GREATER SHEPPARTON

City of Greater Shepparton
90 Welsford St., Shepparton
Locked Bag 1000
Shepparton 3632
(03) 5832 9700



Shire of Campaspe
Cnr. Hare and Heygarth Streets,
Echuca
P.O. Box 35
Echuca 3564
(03) 5481 2200



Moira Shire
44 Station St., Cobram
P. O. Box 578
Cobram 3643
(03) 5871 9222