

## HISTORY OF OUR WATER SUPPLY

The first Australians arrived in this country possibly more than 100,000 years ago. Descendants of these first immigrants, the Koories, lived a nomadic lifestyle, and as such, had no need for a complicated water supply and sewage disposal system.

However, all of this changed following European settlement. Although Europeans have only been in this country for just over 200 years, rapid population growth, the creation of towns and cities, such as Melbourne, and development of industry prompted the creation of a system of water supply and sewage disposal.

### Some Important Dates

**1803:** The first attempt at settlement of the Port Phillip district occurred on the Mornington Peninsula when Colonel David Collins established a camp at Sullivan's Bay, near Sorrento. Water supply was a problem from the start. The only source of water for almost 400 convicts, marines and free settlers was six wooden barrels sunk into the ground to tap groundwater. On 30 January, 1804, Collins moved the settlement to the new Tasmanian town of Hobart.

**1835:** John Batman officially laid claim to the establishment of Melbourne.

**1840:** Only five years after its official beginning, Melbourne rivalled Sydney as the commercial centre of Australia, with a population of 7,000.

Water pumps were installed on the northern bank of the Yarra River. Men with water carts sold water, door to door, for three shillings a barrel, equal to about 30 cents for 550 litres - much more than we pay today.

**1851:** Victoria became a colony in its own right. For the next 50 years, many towns were gradually established. Local creeks and springs, along with underground water, were used to supply these towns.

**1853:** The Board of Commissionaires of Sewers and Water Supply was formed to manage water supply to Melbourne.

**1857:** Yan Yean Reservoir was completed and began to supply water to Melbourne, which by now had a population of 100,000.

The first water rate was one shilling in the pound (5 cents in the dollar) on the value of each property served, and the charge for water was four shillings per 100 gallons (40 cents for 4,546 litres).

**1891:** The Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) was formed.

**1910:** By this year, there were 123,227 connections to the water supply system and 105,993 connections to the sewerage system.

**1916:** The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SR&WSC) began construction of the Bunyip Main Race and the Beaconsfield and Frankston Reservoirs to supply water to the Mornington Peninsula. By 1930, work was completed and most towns in the northern section of the Mornington Peninsula had access to a reticulated water supply.

**1932:** Silvan Reservoir, Melbourne's first off-stream-storage, was completed, increasing Melbourne's water storage capacity by 75%.

**1946:** A 26 kilometre aqueduct that could carry water from the Tarago River to the Bunyip River, and from there on to supply the Mornington Peninsula was completed.

**1958:** By now all towns on the Mornington Peninsula, south of Seaford, had access to a reticulated water supply. The 1950's and 1960's was a time of growth and consolidation, with replacement and renewal of many elements in the water supply system.

**1964:** Devilbend Reservoir was constructed to act as a service reservoir for the growing townships on the southern Mornington Peninsula.

**1967/68** Severe drought leads to introduction of water restrictions relating to the use of fixed sprinklers and hoses, as well as washing cars and filling swimming pools and fountains. People used buckets to water their gardens but even this practice was later restricted.

**1974:** Construction of Cardinia Reservoir was completed. Construction also commenced on local fluoridation plants, as required by new Victorian Government policy.



**1975** Following the drought of 1972/73, work began on formalised water restrictions. Representatives of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (Melbourne Water's predecessor) and the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission produced an eight-stage set of restrictions at the end of 1975.

**1981:** Continued growth in demand of water supply on the Mornington Peninsula finally overtook the district's ability to meet its own needs. Despite upgrading of existing facilities, water from the MMBW reservoir at Cardinia was first used to supplement local supplies.



**1982/83** The drought of 1982-83 affected most of eastern Australia. Among its best remembered impacts were the Ash Wednesday bushfires, in which 13,000 hectares of water supply catchments were burnt, and the February afternoon

when the city went dark during a massive dust storm.

In Melbourne, Stage 6 restrictions were introduced in February 1983. People in even-numbered properties were allowed to use hand-held hoses between 7pm and 9pm on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays and those in odd-numbered properties on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Bucket watering was allowed from 7pm to 9pm on nights hosing was not allowed.

**1984:** Construction of the Thomson Reservoir was completed. The Thomson is the largest capacity reservoir ever built by the MMBW.

**1986:** On 1 July, six local sewerage authorities and the Mornington Peninsula waterworks district of the Rural Water Commission commenced operations as the Mornington Peninsula and District Water Board (MP&DWB).



**1991:** The MMBW merged with the MP&DWB, Dandenong Valley and Western Port Authority, Dandenong-Springvale Water Board, Pakenham Water Board, Lang Lang Water Board and Emerald Water Board to form Melbourne Water.

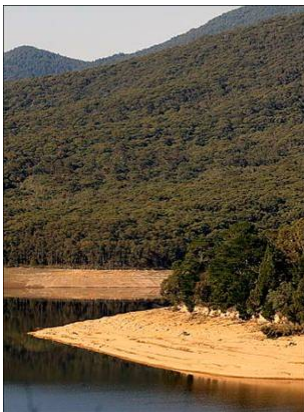
**1995:** Melbourne Water was split into 4 separate businesses.

Melbourne Water became the wholesale supplier of bulk water supply and sewage treatment to three retail businesses - South East Water Limited, City West Water Limited and Yarra Valley Water Limited.

**1997** Melbourne enters drought conditions that are still continuing



**2002** Stage one water restrictions come into force with Melbourne's water storages just over half full. These restrictions limited watering of lawns to a handheld hose or using a sprinkler during specific times at night and in the mornings. Cars could only be washed with a bucket or using a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.



**2003** Melbourne's water storages fall to just 40 percent. Stage two water restrictions are introduced in August preventing household and sportsground lawn watering. Cars also had to be washed using a bucket and not a hose.

**2005** Five permanent water saving rules replaced Stage Two Restrictions in March. These rules include limiting garden watering systems to being used only at night, changing hoses over to trigger nozzles, banning the watering of paved surfaces and having to apply to fill a swimming pool.

**2006** Melburnians are congratulated for saving three litres of water per day per person compared with 2005.

**2007** Melbourne's water storages fall to record low levels, with the Thomson reservoir falling below 20% by February. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, with storage levels at 32%, Stage 3a water restrictions are introduced.