



# Channel Decommissioning

With the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline system in operation, the task of decommissioning channels and associated structures is well underway. GWMWater recognises that property owners are keen to decommission redundant channels and structures as soon as possible and return this land to productive use. To assist this process, all GWMWater channels and structures have been assessed into the following categories.

## GREEN

**No longer required and may be decommissioned once a permit has been obtained.**

## ORANGE

**A detailed inspection and assessment is required before decommissioning can occur.**

## RED

**May be decommissioned subject to landowner obtaining consent from the authorities.**

Details of GWMWater channels and related structures able to be decommissioned are available on the GWMWater website at [www.gwmwater.org.au](http://www.gwmwater.org.au).

Customers who do not have access to the website are able to access this information by phoning the Customer Contact Centre on 1300 659 961 and a staff member will be happy to assist.



Consent is required prior to any decommissioning works being undertaken on GWMWater channels or structures. Please phone our Customer Contact Centre on 1300 659 961 to apply.

Unauthorised decommissioning of GWMWater assets is a contravention of the *Water Act 1989* and landowners will carry the responsibility for any liabilities resulting from this action. This may include responsibility for the costs associated with restoring assets that have been illegally decommissioned. Fines of up to \$60,000 may also apply.

### Safety

Landowners should carefully plan any channel infilling works to be undertaken by themselves, and ensure that they are familiar with the equipment required to complete this work.

If landowners have any doubt about their ability to safely conduct channel infilling then they should engage an experienced contractor to do the work.

### Contractors

GWMWater has compiled a list of contractors within the region who are able to assist landowners to safely carry out decommissioning works. A copy of this list is available on the GWMWater website at [www.gwmwater.org.au](http://www.gwmwater.org.au).

## Private channels

Private channels on private property within the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline area may be decommissioned (this does not include GWMWater channels on private property that are in the orange or red category).

It is recommended that property owners contact their local Council prior to undertaking any decommissioning works, particularly if native vegetation may be affected during the decommissioning process.

## Large channels and structures

It is recognised that some large channels and structures require GWMWater involvement in the decommissioning process and guidelines have been established to identify these.

GWMWater will undertake partial reinstatement of large channels to a standard where the landowner can safely complete the reinstatement.

For information on the guidelines used to assess large channels, please refer to the 'Decommissioning of large channel and structures on private land' fact sheet. >



## Channel easements

Where a channel is located within a registered easement, landowners may choose to have the easement removed from their title. The costs associated with easement removal will be at the expense of the property owner. Alternatively, GWMWater will provide a letter and advice to Council or the Titles Office that specifies the easement in question is no longer required.

To determine if an easement exists on your property, please contact either your solicitor or the Titles Office to obtain a Title Search that will show all registered easements.

## Channel blocks

GWMWater has developed a Channel Isolation Policy to remove the risk of inundation caused by the transfer of flood and drainage water across property boundaries. The policy's intent is to remove drainage problems potentially associated with channels prior to full decommissioning of the channel system.

The main elements of the Channel Isolation Policy are:

- > channel blocks will be put in place at key locations on channels, either at property boundaries, or just downstream from natural drainage lines
- > sections of channel banks will be removed to allow water to be returned to the nearest natural drainage line

Effected landowners will be notified by GWMWater where channel blocks are to be implemented under the Channel Isolation Policy.

Channel blocks will remove the risk of flooding and landowners will only be required to cope with the natural drainage flows that would have passed across each property. Where channel blocks are put in place, landowners may choose to retain the section of channel on private land or undertake decommissioning works. Works that change the location or magnitude of drainage flows may require a planning permit from your local Council.

Channels generally follow the natural contour of the land and cross drainage lines with the potential to collect water as they flow downstream. Channels reduce in capacity the further they go, and will ultimately overflow if used as a drain. A short section of channel can be used as a drain if there is a destination suited to receiving additional flow.

A copy of GWMWater's Channel Isolation Policy is available by phoning our Customer Contact Centre on 1300 659 961.

## Retaining channels

GWMWater's base principle is that all channels and associated structures will be decommissioned unless there is sound justification for their retention. The following policy has been adopted, so that channels will be decommissioned unless specific sections of channel provide:

1. Significant ecological value
2. Local drainage or flood mitigation benefit
3. Erosion control protection
4. Supply to recreational or environmental water storages
5. Water supply supplementation, or
6. Cultural heritage value

Consultation with landowners has indicated a desire to retain some channels, particularly in Supply Systems 3, 4 and 6 of the Wimmera Mallee pipeline.

These channels are considered by the community to be important for managing local drainage and flooding, or providing water to recreational or environmental water bodies.

Where channels are retained, ownership and management of the channel is to be transferred to the landowner, suitable agency or community group via a formal deed of transfer.

## Reference group

A Channel Decommissioning Reference Group has been established to advise GWMWater on the channel decommissioning project including:

- > gathering local knowledge particularly in relation to flooding and drainage to understand the implications of channel decommissioning activities at specific sites
- > determining future ownership and management responsibilities for retained channels and channel assets
- > ensuring that effected landowners and the broader community are informed of the progress and outcomes of the channel decommissioning project

Membership comprises representatives from our Wimmera Customer Committee, local government, catchment management authorities and The Department of Sustainability and Environment.