

GATJIN (WATER) RELEASE

July 2024 | Birch Creek – Frequently Asked Questions

Last month, DJAARA was issued with a once-off water allocation from Newlyn Reservoir to support the health of Birch Creek.

Central Highlands Water transferred 150 Megalitres of water to DJAARA, allowing us to provide much needed base flows for Birch Creek. Throughout June, 4 Megalitres a day was released to enhance ecological cycles and help heal Country.

The water allocation and flow are an important step in our [Dhelkunyangu Gatjin \(Working together to heal Country\), Djaara Gatjin Strategy](#).

Q. Why is DJAARA releasing water from Newlyn Reservoir

A. Newlyn Reservoir captures much of the water that flows into Birch Creek headwaters, which limits flow at certain times of the year. Birch Creek has been assessed as being in poor condition. DJAARA released water as part of a flows program to mimic a natural waterway and support important animals in the river, including platypus and river black fish, both of which hold high cultural significance for Dja Dja Wurrung People (Djaara).

Q. What is a flows program?

A. A flows program is scheduled water releases into a waterway from an upstream reservoir. The releases are designed to replace what would naturally occur and support important processes like fish and platypus breeding.

Q. How much water has DJAARA released to Birch Creek?

A. Throughout June 2024, DJAARA directed the release of 140 megalitres (ML) of Dja Dja Wurrung-owned water to Birch Creek. DJAARA's water delivery increased the creek's flow from the existing minimum of 2ML a day up to 6ML for approximately a month.

Q. Why is this release important?

A. This is the first time water has been allocated to DJAARA. It's an important step in meeting the Dja Dja Wurrung goal to have a recognised and legitimate role in water governance, with genuine consultation in policy development to take part in decision-making about our waterways.

Q. Why does DJAARA have access to the water?

A. DJAARA received 150ML of water through a once-off transfer from Central Highlands Water as their water holdings were surplus to needs for town water supply for the 23/24 year.

Q. Will I have less water available due to the release?

A. The water used by DJAARA is water already allocated and will not affect anyone else's allocations.

Q. Is there less water available for others due to DJAARA releasing water?

A. The same rules that apply to all water users apply to DJAARA, including the allocations determined by Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) – for more information on this please visit the [GMW website](#). DJAARA's water release did not impact others' allocations.

Q. Will DJAARA release water again in future?

A. DJAARA plans to gain access to surplus water held by Central Highlands Water in the future and potentially on a more permanent basis, which would enable further releases to support and enhance Birch Creek.

DJAARA would also be interested in partnering with other water holders in the system to gain greater benefits for the environment and the community. Please contact us if you are interested, at gatjin@djadjawurrung.com.au

Q. How are the benefits of DJAARA's flow being captured?

A. We are conducting a comprehensive monitoring program to continue to refine the flows to the creek. While some of this information is culturally sensitive and not publicly available, you can visit the [WaterWatch website](#) to see water quality results.

