



Media Release

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## **Households asked to use water wisely as El Nino approaches**

Selwyn residents are being urged to use water carefully as El Nino conditions are forecast to affect Canterbury over spring and summer. The El Nino is predicted to be the strongest since 1997-98 and is likely to mean a dry spring and summer, increasing the demand for water.

Rainfall levels have been significantly lower than normal in 2015, and ground water levels have not had the opportunity to recharge as much over winter as normal. Selwyn District Council is monitoring ground water levels and river flows. These are starting to show signs of stress.

“So that we can continue to supply households with water over summer, we are asking people to avoid watering their lawns at times of peak demand for water and to take steps to conserve water,” says Selwyn District Council’s Asset Manager Water Services, Murray England.

“We are asking Selwyn residents on Council water supplies to try to avoid watering lawns between 6am and 9am and 4pm and 9pm daily. Lawn watering in the early hours of the morning is preferred.”

Watering a lawn for one hour in summer can use up to 1,500 litres of water per hour - more water than a whole household typically uses in a day. Selwyn households use as an average of 1,400 litres per day, which is significantly higher than a typical New Zealand household uses.

Mr England says that during a particularly dry summer water supplies are placed under pressure as many people decide to water their lawns and gardens at the same time in the evenings, with demand being particularly high during the weekends.

The Council recommends that people set sprinklers or irrigation systems on a timer to operate between 10pm and 6am as this is the time when demand for water is lowest and when water has the best opportunity to soak into the ground.

The Council recommends that anyone considering watering their lawn during the day between 9am and 4pm should check the weather conditions first. “Watering during the daytime is fine on cooler overcast. Watering during the middle of the day on hot or nor’west days is not a good use of water as a significant amount of water will evaporate,” says Mr England.

“Our advice to households aims to smooth demand for water more evenly throughout the day. We want to try to reduce the demand for water at peak periods, as it is expensive to add additional bores just to meet requirements for peak times for summer lawn watering,” says Mr England.

The Council is also encouraging property owners to avoid wasting water and check the Council's website, [www.selwyn.govt.nz](http://www.selwyn.govt.nz), for advice on sustainable water use.

Over the past year, the Council has been developing new bores to supply Selwyn townships. An additional bore has been brought into service for Rolleston to provide more capacity to keep up with the town's growing population. In Doyleston, a second pipe was constructed earlier in the year to connect the town's reservoir to the pipeline supplying the town from Leeston. This is helping to provide Doyleston with more constant water pressure. In Leeston an upgrade to the wellhead has also been completed which will provide both Leeston and Doyleston townships water supplies with more capacity. One additional bore will also be developed to supply Lincoln and another to supply Prebbleton later this year.

If demand for water increases over summer then water restrictions may be introduced requiring households to avoid watering lawns at specific times. Summer water restrictions are commonly used in New Zealand as a way to manage demand for water. Last summer restrictions were operating in a number of areas including Selwyn, Wellington, Timaru, Akaroa, Ashburton and Nelson. Water restrictions are already in place in Wellington and Lower Hutt for the coming summer.

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