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Two Victorian water researchers have called on the State Government to immediately introduce Stage 4 water restrictions across Melbourne, in the wake of the record low rainfall and the current bushfires.

Mary Crooks and Dr Wayne Chamley, co-authors of the widely circulated publication 'Our Water Mark', have accused the Brumby Government of not showing enough courage in the area of water conservation.

"The Government has been showing an extraordinary timidity in so far refusing to place all Melburnians on Stage 4 restrictions. Indeed, as recently as two weeks ago, the Water Minister Mr Holding ruled out any shift until September 2009," they said in a joint statement.

Recent campaigns for Melbournians to lessen their water use were having minimum impact, according to the authors.

"The Government's recent 155 litres per person per day suggestion has clearly failed to make any real mark on household consumption," Crooks and Chamley said.

They say readers of the 37,000 copies of *Our Water Mark* now circulating across the community would have noticed that "this time last year, when Melbourne's storages were already low, we had on average 4% more water than we do at present."

In light of the current bushfires, the authors say now is the critical time for the Government to act on water.

"With the extensive bushfires still burning in Melbourne's water supply catchments, we can expect some reduction in surface water run-off, even if we were to enjoy average yearly rainfall into the future."

Melburnians themselves need to be more conscious of water saving measures.

"These developments all point to the need to grasp the nettle and try more convincingly to drive down urban daily consumption," Crooks and Chamley said.

"This can only come about by a willingness to intervene and be prepared to use strong regulation to achieve major water savings. Given the extent of the water crisis facing Victoria and Melbourne in particular, it is no longer the time for a wait and see policy response about the resource upon which everyone and everything depends," they said.