

Sustainable Services, supply and savings

Improving Irrigation in Northern Victoria

Northern Victoria
Irrigation Renewal Project

NVIRP

waterforgrowth

Principal

Northern Victoria's future success depends on an affordable irrigation network that can deliver water, when and where it is needed as efficiently as possible. The Victorian and Federal Governments' commitments of \$2 billion to rethink, redesign and rebuild our irrigation network will accelerate northern Victoria's progress towards a more secure future for our farmers, communities and the environment.

The needs and knowledge of water users will drive the design and implementation of the Northern Victorian Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP). The following principles have been agreed by NVIRP and Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) to provide a framework for engagement with customers, local communities and other stakeholders.

1. Timing

We recognise that NVIRP is tasked with modernising the irrigation network within an ambitious timeframe. We also recognise that many of the decisions customers will need to make as part of this project will impact on their water delivery arrangements for decades to come.

- NVIRP and G-MW will allow adequate time for customers to seek relevant advice and make informed decisions on aspects that will determine their future water delivery arrangements.
- NVIRP and G-MW will provide certainty for customers by communicating decisions and project developments in a timely manner.

2. Channel Management

NVIRP offers customers the opportunity to define the service and access requirements they need to grow their enterprise. To maximise these opportunities customers should not be forced to join a pre-determined form of channel management.

- NVIRP and G-MW will work with customers to develop options that can meet customers' current and future service, supply and management needs.

3. The Network

Every customer who wishes to be connected to the network must be given the opportunity to do so. Cost sharing or price differentiation will be transparent. One of the project's goals is to rationalise infrastructure – not customers or their access to the system.

4. Cost

No one can say at this early stage what will happen to costs and prices. NVIRP and G-MW are conscious of the need to minimise costs and to maximise operational efficiency.

- NVIRP and G-MW will communicate decisions and project developments that will impact on future system costs in a timely manner.

5. Service Levels

The term 'service level' does not apply to the level of water in a channel. Some channel levels may be reduced to save water. The term 'service level' refers to the ability of customers to access water at the time, volume and flow rate of their choice. The projects currently under way seek to maximise choice of service level for all customers.

- NVIRP and G-MW will work with customers to develop options that can meet customers' current and future service and supply needs.

6. Reconfiguration

Reconfiguration is part of the White Paper and is Government policy. We regard it as an essential component of system Modernisation. We expect that reconfiguration committees will form an important part of the extensive consultation that will be required for successful completion of Modernisation. Reconfiguration programs should harmonise with Modernisation programs, and the Pyramid Boort Water Service Committee (WSC) provides a good example of how this may be achieved.

7. Tariffs

Tariffs and prices are endorsed by the Essential Services Commission (ESC). G-MW will continue to develop tariffs and pricing policies in consultation with WSCs. G-MW will not initiate any change in tariffs or prices without first consulting WSCs.

8. Metering

More accurate metering is a component of NVIRP and required to meet national metering standards that will take effect from 2009.

- NVIRP and G-MW will aim to provide customers with options for meter type, size and location
- Customer will have opportunity to make an informed decision supported by access to relevant technical advice.

9. Connection to the backbone

We recognise the complexity of decisions that need to be made in relation to the type of connection, the place of connection and on-farm works. We recognise that a range of on-farm works may be necessary to enable new connections and will require the

engagement of consultants and contractors. We also recognise that redefined connections must be matched by satisfactory cost sharing arrangements.

- NVIRP and G-MW will aim to provide customers with opportunity to make an informed decision supported by access to relevant technical and on-farm advice.
- NVIRP and G-MW will work with customers to develop works programs that have adequate regard for the need for on-farm works to complement new delivery arrangements.

10. Modernisation, Reconfiguration and the FoodBowl Principles

NVIRP in partnership with G-MW and customers will build an irrigation network that can meet the on-farm plans of irrigators and equip our region to meet future challenges including drought and/or climate change. This process will engage and reflect the needs and knowledge of customers and we recognise that irrigation areas will find different pathways to the best outcome.

- NVIRP and G-MW will work with existing customers committees including G-MW WSCs and reconfiguration working groups to find the best outcomes in terms of costs, cost sharing and customer service.

11. Balancing certainty with opportunity for continuous learning

NVIRP is already building on the knowledge, technical ability and innovative solutions developed through existing modernisation, reconfiguration and rationalisation projects in our region and from further afield. NVIRP and G-MW fully support a continuous learning approach and expects many aspects of the project will continue to evolve over the course of the project to take advantage of growing systems knowledge, and the evolving plans of our customers. We also recognise that this approach limits our ability to provide certainty and defined outcomes for customers.

- NVIRP and G-MW will communicate decisions and project developments in a timely and transparent manner
- NVIRP and G-MW will encourage the sharing of customer experiences and solutions among all customers.

12. Informed choice

NVIRP and G-MW will provide resources to ensure that customers are well informed about all of the choices available to them and to support early adoption.