

Media Release

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NVIRP referral with Commonwealth

A draft public report addressing environmental issues during the delivery of the \$2 billion irrigation modernisation project in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) has been forwarded to the Department of Environment, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) in Canberra.

The 2000 page report documents the potential impacts on matters of national environmental significance from the modernisation of the GMID and is available for public comment on the NVIRP website www.nvirp.com.au, at the NVIRP office in Shepparton, Department of Sustainability & Environment in Melbourne and the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Resources Library in Canberra until 17 February 2010.

The report prepared by the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) was requested by DEWHA last year when the project was classed a controlled action requiring approval by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The controlling provisions under the EPBC Act were determined to be:

- wetlands of international importance
- listed threatened species and communities
- listed migratory species.

NVIRP CEO Murray Smith said protecting the environment was a vital component of the modernisation project and NVIRP will address any substantive concerns that may be raised by community members.

“We have worked closely with the Department of Sustainability and Environment and other agencies to ensure that our overall environmental performance in the delivery of the project is of the highest standard. The referral of the project under the EPBC Act further confirms our commitment,” Mr Smith said.

“We believe the report shows we have taken measures to ensure wetlands and rivers of high conservation value that formerly derived an environmental benefit from the irrigation channel system will continue to receive a watering regime at appropriate times to maintain and even enhance these values.

“The environment stands to be a major beneficiary by sharing in its 175 gigalitres of water savings achieved by modernising northern Victoria’s irrigation system,” Mr Smith added.

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