

Media Release

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NVIRP providing time to plan

On-going negotiations with landowners to connect to the Backbone or large supply channels throughout the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District are taking into consideration landowners' future planning requirements.

"Our aim is to deliver a modernised irrigation system for northern Victoria by facilitating ongoing farm improvements, reducing the irrigation supply network and making water savings by reducing water delivery losses," Murray Smith, CEO of Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project said.

"The Connections Program undertakes negotiations with landowners in order to avoid modernisation costs by connecting properties directly to the Backbone and rationalising outdated infrastructure. At times this may even include suggesting the sizing of meters for replacement along the Backbone.

"We anticipate in Stage 1 that over 850 kilometres of spur channel and 3,500 current Service Points will be rationalised and 5,000 Backbone Service Points replaced and we are acutely aware of ongoing operation and maintenance costs as specified with these decisions.

"This modernisation project has major implications for on-farm operations and it requires us to give landowners sufficient time to plan and develop their future farming practices.

"We need to work with each individual landowner to ensure there are no undue impacts on their farm as we modernise and rationalise infrastructure, and this is why the Farm Irrigation Assessment process was developed with Farm Designers discussing individual options and opportunities with landowners," Mr Smith said.

"Some of the works will be 'leapfrogged' while on-farm decisions are considered and NVIRP reserves the right to set a deadline for a decision to be made so as not to compromise the operations of the system or to unduly impact on the cost of the modernisation program, specifically if it involves a regulating structure," Mr. Smith said.

NVIRP staff will balance the cost savings generated by an efficient Capital Works program with the benefits achieved with a significant reduction in future infrastructure costs. Service implications will also be a key consideration in the negotiation process, particularly where regulators need to be automated before channel automation will function effectively.

"Depending on how negotiations proceed, it may be necessary to undertake the works later in the winter works program but it is important that landowners are provided with sufficient information quickly so they can make a timely decision and thus maximise outcomes from the program." Mr. Smith added.

In relation to Service Points, more time can be made available for a decision to be made. Where this is decided NVIRP will enter into a written agreement with landowners to defer replacement works where little use is envisaged and more time is required before a final decision is made.

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At John Hewlett of Bamawm's request, NVIRP has deferred the upgrade of this regulator to investigate the potential rationalisation of the whole spur channel.