



Media release

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Irrigation channel backbone revealed

Regional irrigation leaders were involved yesterday in the process of refining the extent (scope) of the automated network of channels called the backbone in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

Eighty irrigation representatives attended the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) forum, as part of the ongoing consultation for the irrigation renewal process also including Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) staff.

According to NVIRP's CEO, Murray Smith, "Irrigators provided feedback on the proposed backbone that will enable NVIRP to refine its definition in preparation to consult with the broader community.

"Our consultations with irrigator representatives on the issues of the backbone have always been planned to deliver the best options to meet the communities and irrigators' expectations," he said.

Yesterday's forum included G-MW's Water Service Committees and Reconfiguration Working Groups.

"All irrigators can be assured that even if they are not directly connected to the backbone that G-MW will supply water via their existing network. NVIRP staff members will be holding information meetings in each region soon so that everyone can see where they fit into the planned route," Mr Smith added.

The information and consultation forum shows the way that NVIRP has worked co-operatively throughout this year with Water Service Committees and Reconfiguration Working Groups and G-MW staff to ensure that the automation of the backbone channels will improve the level of water delivery service.

"The consultations we have held so far have been extremely fruitful and the upcoming meetings in the regions will give irrigators and the wider community a better understanding of the location of the proposed backbone channels and allow us to further refine its intent.

“Our staff will be attending field days and information sessions in the five regions, Rochester-Campaspe, Central Goulburn, Murray Valley, Pyramid-Boort and Torrumbarry and these meeting will be advertised extensively. Automation of the backbone will lead to better control of the water flow and water levels in the channel system and improve overall system efficiency. Data provided by the automatic gates will assist to identify pools with high seepage and leakage losses to further target channel lining works,” Mr Smith said.

NVIRP is focused on irrigation modernisation that has been underpinned by the investment from the \$1 billion Stage 1 of the project which is jointly funded by the State Government (\$600 million), Melbourne Water (\$300 million) and Goulburn Murray Water (\$100 million). Already over 1000 computerised regulator gates have been installed this year between May and August and there will be more than 2000 gates installed over the next two years.

Mr Smith also outlined the policy and procedure relating to the implication of farm connections to the backbone and said that NVIRP staff would be in discussions with irrigators in the next few months regarding meter options.

At the conclusion of the forum irrigators were shown the benefits of a soil moisture metering device that could integrate information back into the remotely operated customer meter to provide significant benefits to farm management.

“I can only reiterate that for everyone living and working in this Foodbowl region the benefits of the irrigation modernisation underpins a more efficient irrigation system, a healthy environment and will benefit the wealth capabilities of the region for years to come,” Mr Smith said.

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