

Media Release

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Understanding exemptions to 4% limit

The Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) has worked with Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) to agree on criteria for the first round of exemptions in the Commonwealth water purchases from the 4 per cent limit.

The recent announcement that the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments had agreed on a landmark reform to return more water to the environment in conjunction with Victoria's irrigation modernisation program, will see exemptions from the 4 per cent limit totalling 60,000 megalitres of water out of the Commonwealth's 2008/09 water tender.

"The criteria were guided by overview plans developed under the G-MW Reconfiguration Program that identified a number of zones less suitable for irrigation in conjunction with the Irrigation Area Atlases that were also developed as part of the Reconfiguration Program," Murray Smith CEO NVIRP said.

'As well, a further criterion, based on the distance from the backbone was used to target purchases.

"Accordingly, NVIRP is comfortable that the 60,000 megalitres of water entitlement that the Commonwealth Government will purchase during this round for its *Water for the Future* program will support plans to modernise the irrigation infrastructure across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District," Mr. Smith said.

Given the importance to future decision making by landowners, G-MW and NVIRP will now use the outcomes from this first round of exemptions to refine the criteria for ongoing exemptions.

"We don't want anyone making major decisions about their future based on this first round - it provides an indication at best - this is about facilitating trades within the agreement," Mr. Smith said.

A Working Group has been established to develop the criteria to apply to future rounds of Commonwealth Government buyback. This includes representatives from NVIRP, G-MW, Department of Primary Industry and both the North Central and Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authorities. It is planned to consult with both Water Services Committees and NVIRP's Modernisation Committees and when both the G-MW and NVIRP Boards have agreed the criteria will be released publicly.

"Our objective is to have the criteria released by early September," Mr Smith said.

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