

## Quotes following several bus tours of the irrigation modernisation....

"After seeing the work that is being done to upgrade the irrigation system and talking to farmers involved, I will be able to better explain to the media how the project works and its benefits to individuals and the region."

Kim Payne  
Media Adviser - Water  
Dept. of Sustainability and  
Environment, East Melbourne

"Staff members of the Sugarloaf Pipeline Alliance inspected some NVIRP works recently and it was an excellent opportunity to put the relationship between the project and the pipeline into perspective and get an understanding of sentiment in the region."

Denise Hurley  
Senior Media Advisor  
Stakeholder Relations  
Sugarloaf Pipeline Alliance

There are 25+ crews and up to 50 construction sites currently in the Pyramid Boort region.

"The work in town has seen houses rented, the caravan park and Victoria Hotel at no vacancy, empty garages used as temporary workshops and storage facilities, and retail businesses doing increased trade. The supermarket has been open later one night a week to cater for the workers.

These guys are working daylight to dark, so it's a good relationship between the workers and the supermarket. And the caravan park is full for the first time ever – that's 20 powered sites and 10 non powered sites and the pub's 12 rooms have been full from 'day one'. Some of the workers were training with the local footy team."

Vincent Bartels  
President  
Pyramid Hill Progress Association

## Do you think your farm layout for surface irrigation is giving you the best returns? Could your efficiency improve by 20 per cent?

These questions are currently being answered through trials being undertaken in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

The Cooperative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures known as the CRC for Irrigation Futures (CRCIF) has pilot trials on nine farms throughout the region. The opportunity to have higher flow rates and shorter irrigating cycles on-farm is potentially one key to achieving greater productivity.

The field trials are using the Irrimate™ system over a broad range of soil types with the objective to demonstrate the application of surface irrigation evaluation to bay irrigated pasture and to identify the potential gains in irrigation performance. The results are showing that there is an opportunity

for substantial water savings through changed practices on-farm when watering permanent pasture.

Bill Williamson, CRCIF Program Leader said improvements can potentially be obtained by irrigators making slight changes to their watering as well as under modernisation where channels are being rationalised. Landowners now have the opportunity to consider whether they stick with surface irrigation or pursue low pressure sprinklers or even sub surface drips, he said.

"The research from the CRCIF and DPI field trials are showing efficiency gains of up to 20 per cent with changed management. These independent trials will help evaluate the on-farm options available."



Left John Wenske, Board Member and Bill Williamson representing the Cooperative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures.

*"Science may be universal but it is how you use it locally with local skills and knowledge that will produce the results for greater productivity in bay irrigation", Bill Williamson CRCIF Program Leader*

## Treading lightly with our environmental footprint

Irrigation modernisation in the north of the State is being undertaken in a landscape that slightly slopes towards the sea and is a highly modified environment following the expansion of years of irrigated agriculture.

In the channel easements and reserves owned by Goulburn-Murray Water, NVIRP's civil construction work is being carried out for the next three years. These easements and reserves have a history of being heavily disturbed with very little remnant vegetation remaining.

To ensure that the irrigation modernisation complies with the regulations set down by the Minister for Planning, an Expert Review Panel was appointed in July. The panel consists of three highly skilled members well recognised in the water and scientific field.

Dr Terry Hillman from Albury, Dr Jane Roberts from Canberra and Denis Flett from Tatura were appointed to provide advice on the hydrological and ecological changes that could occur following NVIRP's work.

The panel has already taken an active role in assisting NVIRP to finalise documentation and as an example they have reviewed the ways in which NVIRP will protect

aquatic and riparian ecological values.

Specific environmental watering plans are also being prepared for any wetlands and waterways that have high environmental importance and could be potentially affected by the NVIRP 2009 modernisation work. These interim watering plans have been prepared for Lake Elizabeth, Lake Murphy, Johnson Swamp and the Loddon River (downstream of Kerang Weir) and the Campaspe River.

NVIRP are working to sure that their works do not impact upon downstream wetlands and waterways and reduce inflows now that there is a more efficient modernised channel system.

Working with the local Catchment Management Authorities, G-MW, DPI, DSE and Parks Victoria, NVIRP is establishing Environmental Watering Plans to mitigate any impacts.

Managing the environmental resilience requires consideration to all the risks associated with new works.

The NVIRP process is being carried out in a partnership approach with the landholder of the asset, those living nearby and recreational users of these wetlands and streams.



Lucinda Ryan, Project Officer NVIRP (left) with members of the reference panel, noted scientists Terry Hillman, Jane Roberts and Denis Flett.

## STOP PRESS

There are currently 107 crews engaged to complete the 2009 winter works program at over 200 work sites in the GMID.

1112 workers have been inducted into the safety systems this winter.

Installation works in the backbone channels are anticipated to be completed for the start of the irrigation season on 15 August 2009.