

Media Release

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Water saving audit underway

Independent auditors have started reviewing water savings from the irrigation modernisation projects in northern Victoria. The auditors met with staff of the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) for the first time this week.

NVIRP CEO Murray Smith said it is an important component of our work that our savings are independently audited to ensure they have been derived from system losses and not eroded irrigators' entitlements.

"We are making sure that the annual savings generated from the investment of \$2 billion in our irrigation upgrades here in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District are calculated in a clear and transparent manner and then independently audited," Mr Smith said.

A Queensland firm, Cardno has been appointed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to externally audit the water savings generated to date from NVIRP's modernisation works.

This audit will independently confirm the actual water savings that have been achieved at the end of the irrigation season in May, as well as the long-term average water savings.

The auditors were selected by a panel chaired by Mr Paul Baxter, a member of the Independent Audit Group of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority reporting on the Cap on water use from the Basin, and the implementation of the Living Murray program. Mr Baxter is Senior Commissioner of the ACT's Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission.

In June the Victorian Government released the Water Savings Protocol, a comprehensive set of guidelines for calculating and allocating water savings generated from irrigation modernisation projects that target a reduction in system losses and these can be viewed on the DSE website www.dse.vic.gov.au.

Based on an approach adopted by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to audit States' compliance with the Murray-Darling Basin Cap, the Protocol is being applied to all current and future irrigation modernisation projects.

"Independent auditing of water savings by accredited and experienced professional auditors is one of the Protocol's main requirements.

"The independent auditor's report will be made public and will provide the community with confidence in the savings gained from these irrigation modernisation projects have been attained," Mr Smith added.

The audited figures are expected to be released publicly later this year.

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