

# Automating the Goulburn Murray irrigation district has only benefits for Northern Victoria

The improved delivery of water in the Goulburn and Murray valleys and the savings associated with NVIRP are a win-win and our catchment can't wait to share in the 175,000 megalitres.

Bill O'Kane, CEO  
Goulburn-Broken  
Catchment Management  
Authority

It's great to work with farmers and watch them open their eyes to the possibilities of what irrigation modernisation will do for their farm.

Clair Haines, Udera,  
Connections Manager,  
NVIRP

Modernisation – it needed to be done!

Russell Pell, Wyuna,  
Chair, Central Goulburn  
Modernisation Group

This unparalleled investment in more efficient infrastructure and the water savings will drive jobs and growth in the region and help to secure the long-term viability of the irrigation industry.

Jacinta Allan, Minister for  
Innovation, Industry and  
Regional Development

Change is a fact of life in farming, and the ability to adapt has been a hallmark of successful farming in northern Victoria since the irrigation system was conceived and built more than 80 years ago.

However, irrigators are now being held back from adapting to some of the biggest challenges they have ever faced, because of ageing infrastructure.

Prolonged drought, climate change, global competition and the trend to larger landholdings are only some of the realities that have exposed the system's failings.

The system needs a complete overhaul. System losses are more than twice Melbourne's annual water consumption.

Even over the past 15 years the prolonged drought, with conditions similar to what is predicted in a worst-case climate change scenario, the system has still lost more than 700,000 megalitres a year on average. Wastage of this magnitude can no longer be acceptable.

Experience with irrigation modernisation projects elsewhere shows that at least half the losses in any given year can be recovered.

This means that more water is available for allocation, particularly in dry years, as system operating requirements (losses) need to be covered before any water can be allocated to irrigators and the local environment. It also means irrigation farmers' allocation or water entitlement will not be reduced as a result of this modernisation.

The NVIRP works will achieve water savings in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) over the next four years through a wide range of improvements. Some of the system losses will be recovered by more accurately metering water being delivered to farms. This ensures that farmers receive the water they are entitled to, rather than some getting more and some getting less.

Automated channel gates allow continuous monitoring of the channel network in helping

to identify sections where high water losses occur. It is in these areas that NVIRP will undertake remedial channel works and reduce the losses.

Having automated structures that continuously adjust and monitor water flow enables better control of the water as it moves along the channel network and improves system efficiency.

In return, irrigators will receive 175,000 megalitres of additional entitlement from Stages 1 and 2 - this additional entitlement is very tradeable. As well they will enjoy the benefits from a fully automated system where water can be ordered and received when it is needed most.

NVIRP's work will also benefit the environment by contributing 175,000 megalitres to improve the health of the region's rivers and wetlands.

The Victorian Government, Melbourne households and the Commonwealth between them are contributing \$1.9 billion so that these works can be undertaken as an integrated

whole, with the advantage of proper planning and design to maximise the benefits.

In return for irrigators contributing \$100 million, more than 80 per cent of the water savings will remain in northern Victoria for the lasting benefit of local communities, businesses and the environment, as well as irrigators.

Every megalitre of water is valuable. Maintaining the status quo, means condemning the region to a slow death as investment and farmers move to where the system is capable of meeting the needs of modern farming in the 21st Century.

NVIRP is providing a huge capital injection to the region which will create jobs and provide a catalyst for additional economic activity – this is a great benefit in the current economic climate.

It is about using the water we have more wisely, sharing the costs and benefits, and investing in a future for our children and generations to come.



## Peter Home NVIRP's FIRST CONNECTION SIGN-UP

### NVIRP WILL:

- Remove Dethridge Wheel from CG9A channel (non backbone spur).
- Provide and install a new accurate Magflow meter on Waranga Western Channel (backbone).
- Provide compensation payment to facilitate on-farm works to realign the farm.

### Benefit:

- A higher level of service to Peter Home's farm.
- Delivery from a highly accurate meter connected to the automated backbone channel resulting in shorter ordering times, more consistent flow rates and higher flow rates.
- Peter will receive a higher supply level on to the farm.

## Rochester farmers take up benefits

This year the Rochester region will lead the irrigation upgrades for the Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP). Large machinery will highlight the capital works being undertaken in this area during May – August. (Other irrigation regions will be undergoing similar upgrades but not of the same magnitude in 2009.)

Last year some 1000 regulator gates were installed into the major channels or backbone throughout the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District. From these backbone channels, farmers are now automating the supply onto their farms through a choice of two new state-of-the-art connections, a Magmeter or a FlumeGate™ replacing the Dethridge wheel.

Sixteen Irrigation Design firms (eight of whom will be working in the Rochester area) are assisting farmers to maximise the benefits of a new delivery system. Opportunities exist for farmers to consider the

potential implications of a modernised water delivery to their property.

Farm Irrigation Assessors will be talking to farmers to ensure the modernised supply system meets their on-farm needs, and to ascertain if there are any opportunities to rationalise delivery points onto their farms. On some properties where underutilised or redundant infrastructure is identified, rationalisation and modernisation may mean a change in the most appropriate service point.

Farmers are making decisions now about how they wish to manage their farm into the future. Other opportunities unfold when technology improves on farm because it can interface with automation and measurement systems like soil moisture monitoring that can then be linked back to the whole farm irrigation operation.

## NVIRP Management Team

The appointment of the team to drive the irrigation renewal in the Goulburn Valley Irrigation Area for the next four years is complete.

CEO Murray Smith said we have launched into 2009 with a complete executive team and only three staff roles to now fill. Our recruitment last year included two former Goulburn-Murray Water managers Ross Plunkett and David Kent who are carrying out similar roles with NVIRP.

Ross Plunkett is on secondment from G-MW and heads the Planning group who are working to undertake irrigation system planning, as well as accounting for water savings and managing the environmental aspects of the project. David Kent joined NVIRP as Modernisation Manager and is leading the team who are working with irrigation farmers in relation to meter replacement and connections or rationalisation opportunities.

Communications Manager Merrill Boyd brings to the position a media and stakeholder engagement background within agricultural communications and the irrigation industry in southern New South Wales.

Garry Seaborne has recently been engaged as Capital Manager and brings an extensive background in successful delivery of complex infrastructure projects including the recently completed Australian Synchrotron project in Melbourne.

John Harvey is Deputy Capital Manager and was involved in the delivery of the duplicated Goulburn Valley highway for Vic Roads before joining FutureFlow last year as Project Manager Channel Refurbishment.

Corporate Services Manager Rick Orr, formerly from DECA, brings a strong corporate governance, business and accounting systems management and experience.



Back row, David Kent (Modernisation), Rick Orr (Corporate Services), Garry Seaborne (Capital), Ross Plunkett (Planning). Seated, John Harvey (Deputy Capital), Murray Smith (CEO), Merrill Boyd (Communications).

**waterforgrowth**