



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Keep clear of irrigation channels

As summer approaches, rural communities in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area are being reminded to stay well away from irrigation channels.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) urges local residents to take particular care of children around water hazards.

MI Chief Executive Officer, Brett Jones, said that swimming or playing in irrigation channels is discouraged for good reasons.

"They may appear to be a tempting place to cool off on a hot day but it's simply not worth the risk," he said.

"There are many hidden dangers that make irrigation channels a treacherous place to swim including strong undercurrents, varying channel depths, snakes and submerged objects."

"Recent channel lining projects in the Lake View and Northern Branch Canals', including fencing, have significantly changed channel conditions in these areas," Mr Jones added.

"The new High-density polyethylene (HDPE) lined channels are very slippery compared to the old earthen or concrete sections. We have installed fencing along lined sections to prevent accidental entry to the channels and stress that no-one should enter these areas."

Mr Jones also pointed out that with the automation of regulator gates being rolled out across the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, gate operation and flows occur as required and conditions can change quickly.

"Regulator gates can open without notice and create a trap, while siphons and pipes can create powerful suction or a water surge," he said.

MIA residents are advised to make use of safer alternatives for swimming such as local public pools and to make sure that children are taught early how to swim. Public pools provide qualified staff members that are on hand to supervise swimmers.

"Australians love the outdoors and swimming but accidents can and do occur," Mr Jones said.

"No matter how experienced a swimmer you are, always be alert around water."

The following general swimming precautions could help save a life: don't swim in irrigation channels; avoid fast flowing water; beware of submerged objects; don't dive into water of unknown depth; know where young children are and never leave them unattended around water; and never swim alone.

**ENDS**

**Photo:** Channel lining on the Lake View Branch Canal

**Media Contact:** Peter Duncan, Communications Officer, phone 0427 235 646 or 02 6962 0200.