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MEDIA RELEASE

Pipes in the ground: Wah Wah on-farm works underway

Wah Wah Stock and Domestic farmers have started installing their new on-farm systems, and are well on the way to becoming their own Private Irrigation District.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) has been working closely with local farmers in the lead up to reaching this critical point in the Wah Wah Stock and Domestic Pipeline Project.

Wah Wah farmer, Bruce McLean, commenced on-farm works in July, with most of his piping now in the ground ready for connection to the Gunbar Water Pipeline in late 2018.

“It has been a long haul, but we got there,” he reflected.

“I have supported the concept from the start, I just wanted the fairest and most efficient option.”

Off-farm works will include the construction of a 280km Gunbar Water Pipeline and 14 private pipelines, as well as pumping stations and outlets.

The problem with the current supply system is that it is inefficient, with water conveyed from Barren Box Storage along the Wah Wah main channel and into 1,590 km of earth channels, to fill more than 600 in-ground tanks on farmers’ properties. Losses from evaporation, seepage and unauthorised access are high, resulting in an overall distribution efficiency of less than 22%.

“The current system does the job but is wasteful and unfair, in terms of the pricing structure,” Mr McLean said.

“The only way to make it fair was to put this pipeline in.”

The project is set to benefit Wah Wah farmers through improved levels of service, with year-round access to the river and bores, pressurised water supply and measured water use, which can be remotely monitored.

Mr McLean did his own on-farm works with the assistance of a specially engineered pipe distribution device, which he designed and built himself.

“The Australian Government is providing the on-farm materials and in turn our part of the bargain is doing the works,” he explained.

“I am more than happy with that arrangement. It is just a relief it is almost in and all the preparation is now coming to fruition.”

Mr McLean will be one of the first farmers in the Wah Wah district to have completed his on-farm works.

“The works have been planned for a while and we have been at it with the installation over the past four months,” he said.

“I was keen to get started as soon as possible, so when the materials arrived I dived straight into the work.”

The \$48.7 million Wah Wah Stock and Domestic Pipeline Project forms part of the almost \$348 million in funding MI will receive under the various rounds of the Australian Government’s Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program in New South Wales.

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Photo: MI engagement officer Scott Hansen with Wah Wah farmer Bruce McLean

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