

MEDIA RELEASE

Murrumbidgee Irrigation



27 March 2009

SEASON CLOSE END APRIL

Following consultation with growers and commodity groups, Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) is planning to close the 2008/09 irrigation season from the 23rd April 2009. The current continuous supply service will be suspended and a rostered service put in place to help reduce system losses now that large area customers have completed summer crops as well as continue to meet horticulture watering requirements.

"We recently surveyed large area customers to determine their winter crop requirements to plan for season close and annual winter maintenance programs. We have also talked with commodity groups and the proposed rostered waterings will provide efficient delivery of critical supply to horticulture as well as assist in possible frost-damage prevention," commented David Heffer, MI's Irrigation Services Manager. "With water still in short supply we need to do everything possible to minimise losses and maximise effectiveness."

For gazetted horticulture and other customers located in continuous supply zones following season closure, MI intends to undertake a series of rostered supplies between 4th to 8th May / 25th to 29th May and 17th to 25th June, in line with demand and prevailing weather conditions. We will continue to liaise with the relevant industry groups to determine the most appropriate service and timing. For customers located outside of continuous supply zones, a rostered stock and domestic watering will be available from the 25th to 29th May. Further details will be released in April and rostered events advertised.

Selected channels will retain water for town and village supplies. MI will be required to drain most channels during the winter shutdown period to maximise the impact of frost on weed control and to enable access to channels to complete the annual capital works program. Over \$3 million in capital works on channel infrastructure, including bridges and culverts, is planned during this shutdown period. Any water that remains after shutdown is available for consumptive use, subject to normal ordering and access rules, however MI makes no undertaking in respect of continued access under these conditions.

Customers who consider they have special needs should contact Irrigation Services in either Griffith or Leeton. Large Area customers are encouraged to plan to ensure they are self sufficient until the start of the 2009/2010 irrigation season which is likely to be early to mid August. Any broad-acre customers that have irrigation plans beyond the 23rd of April should also make contact with Irrigation Services to confirm if shutdown arrangements can accommodate requirements as the system is de-watered. MI will take into account conveyance losses when determining serviceability beyond the 23rd April.

MI is currently installing a new information system to ensure easier and quicker access for customers to their account information. All customers will soon be able to order their water either over the phone or through our website as well as check their account balances and a range of other information that will assist with time efficient decision making and ordering. Training materials and hands-on-training sessions will be made available to customers as soon as system installation and checking is complete, which is envisaged early on in the 2009/10 season.

Ends

For further information regarding this media release, contact the MI Irrigation Services Planner, in either Griffith (02 6962 0200) or Leeton (02 6953 0100).