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For immediate release

Page 1 of 1

ERADICATION TRIALS FOR NOXIOUS WEED TO COMMENCE

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) will commence new trials to eradicate a noxious weed from MIA's supply and drainage system in June.

The weed, scientifically known as *Sagittaria graminea*, has been difficult to control due to its many methods of reproduction with each plant potentially producing up to 20,000 seeds over its lifetime. Cutting the weed does not assist its control as it can still reproduce vegetatively by stem or root fragments.

First identified in the area in 1990, *Sagittaria graminea* has spread so rapidly, it has become a significant threat to irrigators by blocking water flow, greatly reducing the effectiveness of the irrigation system and potentially affecting crops.

MI's Assets Executive Manager, Mr Geoff Beard, said although MI has been actively treating the weed through spot spraying with glyphosate, this has not stopped its spread through external carriers such as birds and human activities.

"Given that no single approach has been successful, it is now vital to use a combination of approaches to eradicate it depending on size and density of infestation," said Mr Beard.

The trials, commencing on 1 June, will include the use of a pre-emergent treatment that prevents regrowth of vegetation when applied, known as *Casoron G Herbicide*. A permit from the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Authority has been issued to MI for the use of this product that contains 67.5g/kg dichlobenil as the active constituent.

Sagittaria graminea is also a significant problem in other irrigation channels and drains in the Murray Valley and Shepparton Irrigation Areas within Goulburn Murray Water system. Goulburn-Murray Water alone has already spent more than \$500K annually to manage this weed in irrigation channels including the use of *Casoron G Herbicide*.

"Whilst we have not reached the same weed level in the MIA area, it is necessary to commence new treatment methods before we too find ourselves spending these large sums in its eradication," said Mr Beard.

The treatment will be applied directly to affected drainage reaches in the Mirrool and Benerembah districts by mechanical means. As a precaution, MI advises customers that the MI drainage system will be closed and held in isolation during the treatment process. Treatment will continue for a period of up to 12 weeks and customers will be notified when the system reopens.

Water samples will be tested at the application site and several other sites downstream during and after the treatment process to ensure compliance with Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council's (ANZECC) environmental guidelines.

An information fact sheet about *Sagittaria graminea* can be found on MI's website at www.mirrigation.com.au.

Ends - For further information regarding this media release, please contact Geoff Beard, Executive Manager Assets, Murrumbidgee Irrigation on 02 6962 0200.