



Murrumbidgee  
Irrigation

COMPANY REVIEW

**Set for Success**

A photograph of two children standing in a field of tall green grass, silhouetted against a bright sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong backlight effect.

**2019**

**“Murrumbidgee  
Irrigation’s role is  
simple... to deliver  
the right services at  
the right price”**



As we again move into drought, it is clear that success for irrigation in an era of lower and more variable allocations will depend on flexibility and efficiency. To meet these challenges, we have continued our modernisation journey and taken active steps to simplify our asset base. Planning and investment in infrastructure remains the foundation of long-term success for the MIA.

Through our \$348 million modernisation program we are able to better adapt to variable allocation conditions and support our farmers who are demonstrating the tremendous strength and resilience of the MIA. Automation of our main network is already paying dividends through improved supply efficiency. This year we were able to use these automated pools to optimise deliveries and better regulate flows in times of scarcity. In the coming year we will extend this automation to the farm gate through our outlets program, enabling us to work together to capture every drop for production.

We have taken active steps this year to simplify our asset base. In a cost recovery business like ours it is essential that the assets we maintain are limited to those we need and those we have are fit for purpose. In addition to the intensive outlets program of the last few years, as we upgrade parts of our network we are reviewing and removing other unnecessary assets like culverts, regulators, channels, and even bridges. Removing unnecessary costs keeps our costs contained and our price path predictable. As a result of these programs we have again contained customer price increases to CPI and reduced our DE charge.

We are committed to continuing to work with our customers to enable the production of the fresh produce and natural fibre upon which our nation depends. Murrumbidgee Irrigation’s role in this is simple – to deliver the right services at the right price, and everything we do is focused on just that.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brett Jones". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Brett Jones  
Chief Executive Officer &  
Managing Director

# Set for Success

A tremendous amount was achieved over the past year, as we continued modernising and simplifying our asset base to enable us to adapt to changing conditions. We also continued our new customer engagement approach with teams dedicated to working with customers to understand their business and provide key points of contact for the services they need. Below is a snapshot of the efforts we are taking to help set our customers and the MIA up for success

- We focus tested our new mobile App which will be released this year. The App makes it easier for customers to make requests, check the progress of trades and more, at the click of a button
- Our trade team processed over 3,700 temporary trades and for the second year in a row we had more water coming into the MIA than leaving
- We took active steps to simplify our asset base with 174 farm outlets and 11 regulators removed. We also removed 22 bridges and culverts
- Our water delivery and maintenance staff travelled nearly 2 million kilometres to service our customers' needs
- We reduced our area of operations by over 300,000 hectares with the successful completion and handover of the Gunbar Water Pipeline
- The Yanco village facelift was completed with the removal of redundant channels and the installation of gravity and low pressure pipelines
- We ramped up our action on recovering water from overdrawn water accounts and increased our compliance on unauthorised access points to ensure customers get, and pay for, their fair share



**36,145**  
Customer interactions

As part of this, our customer engagement team met with over 1,500 customers throughout the year - this is in addition to hosting around 30 small lateral meetings on delivery entitlements



**535**  
Modernised outlets

Modernised 535 farm outlets  
and 25 regulators



**11,694**  
Maintenance jobs

11,694 individual maintenance jobs were completed in the year. All of these focused on ensuring our supply and drainage channels meet customer needs



# Automation

## Communication is the key

Automation works by realtime communication up and down the network. It's like having a person stationed on every regulating structure waiting to adjust the flow immediately to meet changing demand. Communications towers fill in the black holes and let the network connect. We have installed nine new communications towers, and upgraded four existing towers, to support the network.

## Getting the service right

We have been listening to our customers as we transition to automation. We have heard that customers want to retain access to occasional low volume flows for filling spray carts and flushing drip lines and that there needs to be an easy and effective method for shutting down or changing supply when things change. This year we will be piloting full automation on two discrete areas of our network in order to work with our customers to get this right before full rollout in 2020/21.



The Control Centre is the hub of our communications network



Automation is like having a person at every regulator



An upgraded regulator at Warburn



Communication is the key to automation

“Automation is like having a person on every regulator waiting to adjust the flow immediately...”

# Maintaining a fair price path

Our objective is to only retain and maintain the assets that we need to deliver the services our customers want and to keep our costs on a fair price path.

## Reducing our area of operations

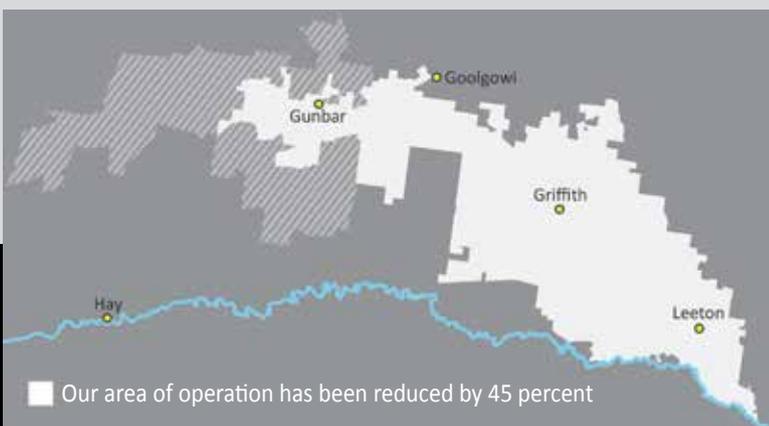
We reduced our area of operations by almost half this year with the handover of 300,000 hectares to Gunbar Water. As well as saving over 9,000 megalitres of water and providing a modern and reliable stock and domestic water supply, the project has resulted in the removal of over 1,500 kilometres of earthen channels and the associated maintenance and conveyance costs.

## Removing redundant assets

As part of our rationalisation program we have been removing redundant assets including channels, regulators, bridges and culverts, where they have become unsafe or are restricting flow across the network. On the Lake View Branch Canal, we replaced two redundant regulating bridge structures with one bridge that was upgraded to meet the school bus route needs. The future upkeep and maintenance of this bridge now vests with the Griffith City Council. Similarly, we have worked with the Leeton Shire Council to upgrade and hand over the Vance Road bridge.

## Outlets program

We are now almost halfway through our outlets program. This has provided customers with the ability to reconfigure the number and size of their access points to meet changing crop and farm layout needs. So far we have reduced the number of outlets in service by 320, which helps keep future costs lower.



The new bridge over Lake View Branch Canal



Removing redundant assets

“We’re working together to meet changing needs and conditions”



Customers can reduce their costs by reducing outlets

# Every drop counts, especially in low allocation years



Lake Talbot in Narrandera was utilised to reduce supply impacts

**“Our automated structures ... create a series of mini reservoirs across the network “**



Authorised access identification

## Meeting customer needs

Getting our river orders right means we need to predict customer water needs a week in advance. This is always a challenge for our operations team but more so in periods of high irrigation demand. By using our automated structures to maintain pool heights this year we were essentially able to create a series of mini reservoirs across the network. This, coupled with working with Councils to manage non-essential usage, meant that we were able to reduce the extent and severity of supply impacts on customers during the week of 40+ temperatures we experienced this summer.

## Taking action on unauthorised access

Counting every drop becomes doubly important in low allocation years. This year we ramped up our actions to recover water from overdrawn water accounts and increased our compliance on unauthorised access points. Our engagement team has been proactive in working with customers to ensure all customers get, and pay for, their fair share.

## Facelift for the home of irrigation

Yanco Village is the home of irrigation in the MIA and so it was terrific to be able to refresh the aging infrastructure supporting the village. Through the year we removed redundant infrastructure and replaced some of our gravity channels with gravity and low-pressure pipes to better match customer needs. The result is a facelift for Yanco Village and improved safety for residents, flow control and reduced water losses.



Yanco before works



Yanco after pipeline installation

Counting every drop .... every drop counts

# Investment now for future success

Investment in modernisation is the key to long term success in a future with less water

## Our modernisation program setting us up for future success

The \$348 million investment in modernising our network, through the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP), is directly benefiting our customers through efficiency and productivity. This long-term planning is setting the region up for success in a future with less water.

## Adding value to operations

The extensive investment in our network is already adding value to our operations by providing greater flexibility in water delivery, as well as consistent flow rates and lower maintenance and operational costs.

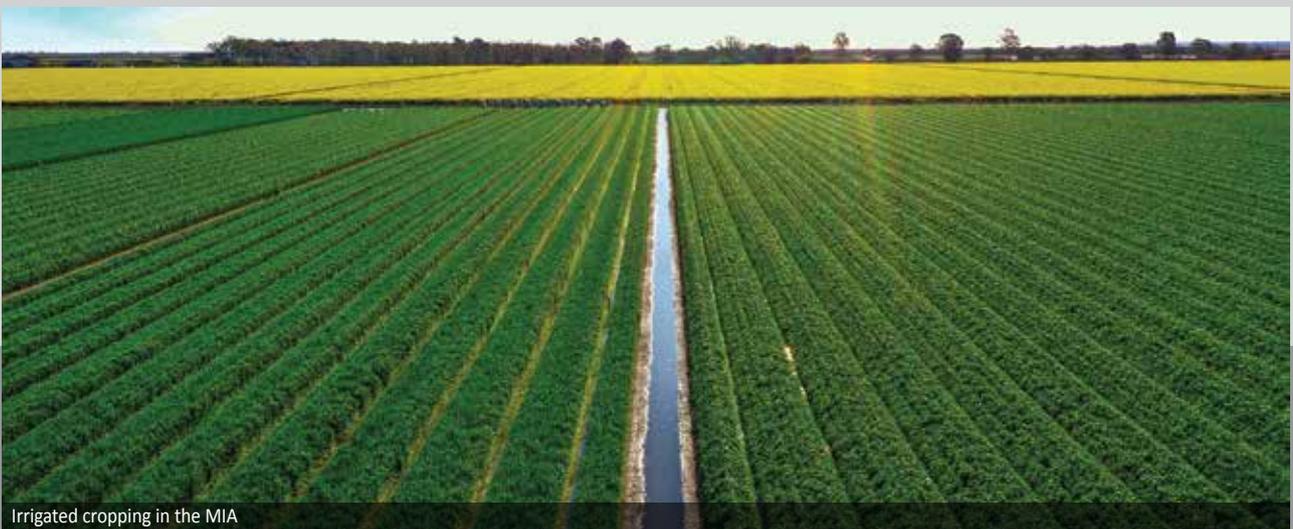
## Responding to less water

With the continuing dry conditions and low allocations, modernisation is enabling us to deliver water in a way that best meets customer needs while optimising system efficiency. There is no doubt that a responsive system means that we are better equipped to meet the changing crop and flowrate needs of our customers and together we are adapting to a future with less water.



Modernisation works provide a more responsive system

“The MIA is a fantastic example of what a region can do when it has access to productive water “



Irrigated cropping in the MIA



## Murrumbidgee Irrigation

Murrumbidgee Irrigation is proud to be part of the most productive irrigation area in the nation.

We deliver water to more customers than any other irrigation company in Australia.

The irrigation water that we supply feeds the diverse and highly productive agricultural region known as the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA).

The MIA is home to Australia's largest producers of prunes, walnuts and almonds and the largest producer of chicken meat in the southern hemisphere

In good years, the MIA produces enough cotton in one season to make 193 million pairs of jeans

Last year, the MIA produced 65% of NSW's rice crops and around 60% of Australia's rice

The MIA produces 1 in every 4 glasses of Australian wines. We are the largest wine producing region in NSW and the third-largest in Australia. We are home to the biggest wine bottling plant in the southern hemisphere

The MIA produces 60% of NSW's citrus, which is one third of all the citrus in Australia

MURRUMBIDGEE IRRIGATION LIMITED

PHONE: (02) 6962 0200

EMAIL: [info@mirrigation.com.au](mailto:info@mirrigation.com.au)

OFFICES: 86 Research Station Road, Hanwood NSW 2680 and  
Dunn Avenue, Leeton NSW 2705

WEBSITE: [www.mirrigation.com.au](http://www.mirrigation.com.au)