



MEDIA RELEASE

21 March 2018

MI taking giant steps towards automation

Murrumbidgee Irrigation are taking giant steps towards automation, recently commencing a program of modernisation works in the south-western part of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area network.

The 2018 modernisation program forms part of the largest suite of works undertaken in the area in over 100 years, and takes the total investment by the Australian Government in our region, to support the implementation of the Basin Plan, to almost \$348 million.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) CEO, Brett Jones, said the works are critical to enable MI to maximise the benefits of the projects already completed across the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

“It will also support any future investment in the network,” he said.

“This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reduce our operating costs, increase flow capacity and improve supply reliability.

“It is certainly an exciting time to be at the helm of Australia’s premier irrigation district. Our region is thriving and there is new investment everywhere you look.”

While some works are commencing in the current irrigation season, to complete the major works there will be an extended 2018 winter shutdown period for the south-western part of the network. Areas impacted include the Sturt Canal and Benerembah channel systems, Warburn/Tabbita/Wah Wah districts, and Yanco village.

Mr Jones assured the community that despite the larger scale modernisation works this year, they will not be as noticeable, with no impact to town water supplies.

“We are not conducting major works on the Main Canal system this year, however some sections may be drained to allow for annual maintenance and minor capital works,” he said.

MI General Manager Asset Delivery, Jody Rudd, acknowledged that last year's shutdown of the Main Canal was challenging, particularly for citrus growers whose fruit was more susceptible to frost damage because they were unable to water their trees at certain times.

“What we've learnt from that process is to work closer with our growers to identify the areas we need to keep water for winter watering, and to continue to consult with those growers,” he said.

“We've also invested in more pumps to push water around sites when need be, so we're confident we can better meet the needs of growers.”

Mr Jones said it could be anywhere between 200-300 people involved in the works, which includes local contractors.

“There's currently a large demand on contractors so we're probably looking at bringing some in from outside to supplement the local contingent,” he said.

“This will provide a boost to the local economy.”

Channel widening works on the Sturt and Warburn channels have commenced, while automation works in Widgelli and Bilbul will start soon.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation is working with Australian Government support to deliver projects that will optimise economic, social and environmental outcomes in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. If you have any questions or would like more information on the modernisation works or expansion opportunities please call Murrumbidgee Irrigation (02) 6962 0200.

**This Project has been funded by the Australian Government as represented by the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources Funding Agreement under Round 3 of the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program in NSW.*

Photo: An aerial view of a section of south-western part of the MIA network.

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