



MEDIA RELEASE

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MURRUMBIDGEE IRRIGATION HIGHLIGHTS WATER SAVINGS FOLLOWING ABC 4CORNERS PROGRAM

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) Chief Executive Officer, Brett Jones, has expressed disappointment at the unbalanced reporting in the 4Corners program “Cash Splash” which aired last night.

“We are disappointed and saddened on behalf of our staff, our customers and the irrigation communities we support that the program failed to give a balanced assessment of the various water efficiency measures which have led to genuine and sustained water savings delivered to the environment from the MIA,” he said.

Mr Jones said the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP), funded by the Australian Government, had delivered real gains for both irrigation communities navigating drought and the environment. Efficiency programs have delivered over 50 billion litres of water back to the government for use each and every year as part of the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

The PIIOP program has funded infrastructure which has significantly improved the efficiency of irrigation in the MIA. Whilst not an easy task, he said this program is making tangible progress in improving the efficiency of water use for irrigation in the Murray Darling Basin.

“The funds have been allocated entirely transparently and in line with the Australian government guidelines. The program is rules based and is equally available to all eligible businesses regardless of size, and we are proud to acknowledge that all of MI’s more than 2300 customers have benefited from the program,” said Mr Jones.

“At all times MI, and our employees, have operated with complete transparency and integrity. Indeed, MI agreed to be interviewed by 4Corners and assisted with their visit to the region in order to highlight the positive impacts of investment in the region and to demonstrate the efficiency of our operations.”

The PIIOP program has been independently audited by the Australian Government prior to works being accepted, during the works and after the projects are completed. In each audit MI has been found to be operating properly.

Water available for use in the MIA is metered as it enters our system from the Murrumbidgee river. “What is important is that irrigators are able to put the water allocated to them via a licence to the most productive use possible” said Mr Jones.

PIIOP funds have only been used to modernise irrigation infrastructure to deliver water use efficiencies. The replacement and modernisation of the old manually operated system results in an improved operation capability of our channels.

Some additional works have been concurrently undertaken to allow the new control structures to be utilised to their capacity. These works are outside the scope of the PIIOP funding agreement and have been fully funded by MI and the customers involved.

Mr Jones noted that whilst it is currently a difficult period for irrigators and local businesses due to the ongoing drought, and associated low allocations, the sector is still managing to boost efficiencies.

“Irrigation farmers in the MIA have demonstrated innovation and foresight in implementing systems which mean they are able to produce the same or more food and fibre with less water. It is therefore disappointing that 4Corners steadfastly refused to provide balance by sharing the stories of these positive, innovative family farmers.

“Our irrigated industries are key to sustainably producing the fresh produce and natural fibres upon which Australia’s communities and economy depend, and they deserve to have their industry portrayed fairly.”

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