



MEDIA RELEASE

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Stay clear of irrigation channels

As summer approaches, rural communities in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area are being reminded not to take the risk of swimming in irrigation channels.

Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) Chief Executive Officer, Brett Jones, said with the ongoing rollout of automation across the MIA, regulator gates are controlled remotely meaning flows and conditions can change quickly.

“Regulator gates can open without notice and create a trap, while siphons and pipes can create powerful suction or a water surge,” Mr Jones said.

“Also, channel lining projects last year in the Lake View and Northern Branch Canals, including fencing, have significantly changed channel conditions in these areas.

“The new High-density polyethylene lined channels are very slippery compared to the old earthen or concrete sections.”

Mr Jones urged residents to take particular care of children around water hazards.

“Swimming or playing in irrigation channels is discouraged for good reasons,” he said.

“They may appear to be a tempting place to cool off on a hot day but it's simply not worth the risk.”

“There are many hidden dangers that make irrigation channels a treacherous place to swim including strong undercurrents, varying channel depths, snakes and submerged objects.”

MIA residents are advised to make use of safer alternatives for swimming such as local public pools and to make sure that children are taught early how to swim. Public pools provide qualified staff members that are on hand to supervise swimmers.

“Australians love the outdoors and swimming but accidents can and do occur,” Mr Jones said.

“No matter how experienced a swimmer you are, always be alert around water.”

The following general swimming precautions could help save a life: don't swim in irrigation channels; avoid fast flowing water; beware of submerged objects; don't dive into water of unknown depth; know where young children are and never leave them unattended around water; and never swim alone.

ENDS

Photo: Roaches Regulator automated flume gates, which can open without notice.

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