

Media release

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Inside MI: Directors view from both sides of the fence

In the lead-up to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI) Annual General Meeting, we sat down with Director John Houghton to hear how his perspective of MI has changed, from being a long-time customer, to now also sitting on the Board.

"Before joining the Board, I saw MI as a reliable water delivery company, but one that still operated with a legacy mindset from the old Water Commission days," John said. "Customer input didn't seem to be a priority, and there was a sense of arrogance in decision-making. It felt top-heavy."

Now, two years into his directorship, John sees a different picture.

"I've come to appreciate how much MI values customer feedback and how hard the team works to stay compliant with government policy while protecting customer rights. The level of regulatory compliance required day-to-day was a real eye-opener."

John praised the passion and pride MI employees bring to their roles.

"There's a strong sense of ownership among staff. They genuinely care about the impact of their work and the businesses they support across the MIA."

Reflecting on past frustrations with customer complaints, John acknowledged the improvements underway.

"Previously, complaints could get lost in the system. But with the new customer complaints platform, issues are being heard and resolved more efficiently, with real outcomes."

John highlighted the success of MI's automation rollout and its ongoing evolution.

"The automation system is delivering water savings and improving delivery efficiency. It's been a real gamechanger, boosting on-farm productivity and contributing to sustainable growth throughout our region."

While he always considered MI trustworthy, John admitted he hadn't fully appreciated its transparency.

"Reading annual reports and engaging with customer groups would've helped me understand more. From the inside, I see the effort teams put into listening to customers and delivering better outcomes. Trust grows when we listen, respond promptly, and know our field."

John described his board experience as both a privilege and a learning journey.

"After 40 years farming in the MIA, I've seen incredible change. Being on the Board allows me to contribute to shaping MI's future with a balanced view."

"I encourage other customers to consider standing for the Board, it's a vital role that helps ensure continued growth in our region."

ENDS

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