

Terry McFarlane Mixed-Crop Farmer

Widgelli, NSW

At his Widgelli property, Terry McFarlane runs a highly specialised and diversified operation, managing niche vegetable seed crops and fish farming within a relatively small, irrigated footprint. With limited area and a focus on high-value outputs, precision and timing are critical and water is at the centre of it all.

Terry works with national and global seed companies to grow a rotating mix of crops such as hybrid canola, wheat, sunflowers, onions, pumpkins and basil. The crop mix changes year to year depending on demand, requiring a flexible and responsive irrigation system to support this evolving production base.

Automation game changer

The automation of MI's water delivery has been a game-changer for Terry. What used to require coordinating closely with the manual "water balance" system, restricted to business hours and dependent on staff availability, has now become a streamlined and independent process. Using MI Connect, Terry can start and stop irrigation whenever the crops need it, including at odd hours of the night, and then monitor outcomes during the day. This shift has been especially important for his delicate vegetable seed crops, where overly wet beds can quickly cause damage.

The upgraded outlets and automation mean water can now be applied in smaller, more targeted amounts, with shorter run times and higher flow rates. The result is not only better distribution across his irrigation beds but also reduced waste, with less water sitting too long in parts of the field or draining past the crop root zone. Terry highlights the two-hour turnoff feature as a standout benefit, giving him added flexibility, especially useful when managing variable demands from both vegetable crops and his Murray Cod fish dams.



Responsiveness is key

When quick action is needed, Terry knows he can call the MI control room and get water delivered almost instantly. He's full of praise for the responsiveness of the team and their helpful attitude, saying the improvements in service over the past few years have made a real difference to his business.

"The direction MI is heading in feels really positive. The staff are great, and the tools we have now give me the flexibility I need."

Terry has also fully embraced the MI Connect app, describing it as easy to navigate, even joking that it's simple enough for an "old guy" like him. He's noticed marked improvements since the latest update and now finds the app more flexible and user-friendly than ever.

Looking to the future

Beyond seed crops, Terry has expanded the productive potential of his farm by partnering with Aquana Sustainable Murray Cod to build and lease fish dams. Fish farming adds another layer of complexity to water needs, requiring the ability to access water at short notice to manage the health of fish stocks. It's a diversification that's only been possible thanks to the reliability and high-flow capacity of MI's delivery system.

Though Terry acknowledges the ongoing risk of dry years, a challenge every irrigator understands, he remains optimistic. With better technology, responsive service, and a strong support network in place, he feels well-equipped to continue making every drop of water count.

