

Media Release

Thursday 10 April 2025

Turbocharging irrigation water savings

Some of the largest irrigation companies in Southern NSW are gearing up for the future, with nearly \$10 million locked in to investigate levelling up their water networks to make every drop count and support a healthier Murray–Darling Basin.

New feasibility studies funded under the Australian Government’s \$494 million Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program are being delivered in partnership with the NSW Government, exploring ways to boost efficiency across these vast systems.

The new funding includes:

- \$3.8 million towards a comprehensive assessment of Murrumbidgee Irrigation’s network to understand where water is being lost and identify an effective mitigation approach such as new channel piping, lining and/or covering to reduce evaporation and leaks. It will also explore alternate and more efficient ways to supply water to the Barren Box storage facility, with these works potentially saving up to 10 GL.
- \$6 million to investigate water saving opportunities at Murrumbidgee Irrigation, Murray Irrigation and Coleambally Irrigation by better understanding different water needs in the future, assessing new technology and engineering solutions and how these could be incorporated into existing operations, potentially saving between 50 GL-100 GL of water.

These projects aim to help NSW meet its Basin Plan commitments by contributing towards the Commonwealth’s 450 GL of additional environmental water recovery target and reduce the need for voluntary water purchase.

The feasibility studies are expected to be completed by June this year, informing the next steps for possible further infrastructure upgrades.

To find out more, please visit: water.nsw.gov.au/resilient-rivers

Quotes attributable to DCCEEW Executive Director of Infrastructure Development Lisa Hingerty:

“We’ve already been working closely with Murrumbidgee Irrigation on a number of innovative infrastructure projects but we’re kicking things up a gear with this next package of works exploring covering and lining their channels to prevent leakage and evaporation which will help save even more water.

“Now we’re bringing two more irrigation companies onboard and seeing what upgrades we can make to their systems over the long run to prepare for a future with less reliable water.

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“Tangible projects like these are helping NSW reduce the need for voluntary water purchases.

“Investing in new water saving infrastructure is the best way to maximise water for the environment and improve the health of the Basin.”

Quotes attributable to Brett Jones CEO Murrumbidgee Irrigation (MI):

“Our goal has always been to complete as many infrastructure projects as possible to support our irrigators, industry, and communities.

“Under the Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program, MI has already been successfully allocated \$62.2 million for the Urban Channel Pipeline Project to replace inefficient aging channels around Griffith and Leeton with 47.5 kilometres of new pipeline and we have also just completed our decade-long automation program.

“These feasibility projects are the next step in making sure that our area can make the most out of the available water and secure the future of this region for many decades to come.

“If the projects are successful, it will be a win for everyone, with flow on economic benefits throughout the community, while also delivering water savings for the environment.

“We need to be ready to support our irrigators through seasons of vastly changing water availability, and these projects will help to keep our region viable for the future.”

Quotes attributable to Ron McCalman CEO Murray Irrigation Limited:

“Murray Irrigation acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth and NSW government in supporting these feasibility studies.

“We’re looking forward to working with NSW DCCEEW, Murrumbidgee Irrigation and Coleambally Irrigation to investigate potential opportunities for water savings, and financial and operational improvements across each of our irrigation districts.

“This collaboration and access to funding is a positive step to ensure Murray Irrigation has explored and analysed potential solutions to provide shareholders and the community with long-term resilience and business viability in an environment of water recovery.”

Quotes attributable Julian Speed CEO Coleambally Irrigation:

“It’s important that Coleambally Irrigation, on behalf of our members and customers, is afforded every opportunity to explore ways to improve our business resilience and delivery efficiency.”

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