



Murrumbidgee Irrigation

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (MIA) is one of the most diverse and productive regions in Australia, forming part of the Murray-Darling Basin and covering an area of 378,911 hectares of which up to 190,000 hectares is irrigated. The MIA is home to over 50,000 people with the majority of jobs tied inextricably to the water we supply to farms and industry.

Where does the water used in the MIA come from?

Water for the MIA is supplied from the Murrumbidgee River and is supported by Burrinjuck and Blowering Dams in the upper Murrumbidgee catchment. Blowering Dam stores water that has been released from storages further upstream in the Snowy-Tumut Development section of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme.

Water releases from Blowering and Burrinjuck Dams are managed by Water NSW, to provide for town water supply, irrigation and environmental use requirements. The Snowy Scheme contributes inflows to the Murrumbidgee River of around 25% during average inflow years and up to 60% during drought years.

Operations

Murrumbidgee Irrigation Limited (MI) provide irrigation water and drainage services to the MIA.

There are two river offtakes within the system, Berembed Weir near Narrandera which feeds into the Main Canal and Gogeldrie Weir near Leeton which diverts water into the Sturt Canal. The Main Canal has a maximum flow capacity of 6,600 ML/day while the Sturt Canal has a capacity of 2,200 ML/day.

MI operates over 1,740km of supply channels, and 1,547km of drainage channels. Of the supply channels, around 194km are piped, 100km lined and the remainder are earthen channels.

The integrated supply and drainage system gives us the strategic advantage of being able re-use a majority of water within the area. The irrigation area operates on a closed system which means no water is returned to the river once it enters the MIA.

Who uses the water?

Water diverted into the MIA is used to supply the major townships of Griffith and Leeton as well as over 3,000 agricultural landholdings. Irrigated agriculture is the primary industry in the MIA and supports many ancillary businesses such as wineries, juicing factories and processing plants.

Irrigators in the MIA have licences which allow them to use up to a prescribed volume of water each year. This volume of water may vary depending on rainfall events, and how much water is stored in the dams.

Irrigation water is delivered and metered by MI and irrigators pay for the water they use.

Modernisation

MI continues to prioritise infrastructure development to improve system efficiency and our service to customers. The company is currently undertaking the most ambitious renewal and modernisation program in our history.

Works commenced in 2013 replacing and automating aging water delivery infrastructure, and relining and refurbishing channels.

These works are aimed at using water efficiently and have mostly been funded by the Australian Government under the Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (\$348 million).

In January 2022, we welcomed the announcement of a further \$124 million in funding under the State led Off-farm Efficiency Program, to finalise our automation works.

With around 80 percent of the system now automated, finishing the rollout of automation across the delivery network will allow more customers to benefit from the investment.

