

Connections Project: Securing our region's future

About the Project

The Connections Project is ensuring the future prosperity of our region.

The \$2 billion Project is the largest irrigation modernisation project in Australia. Funded by the Victorian and Australian governments, the Project will ensure the sustainable future of productive agriculture in northern Victoria.

The Project is generating water savings by creating a world leading delivery system that boosts irrigator productivity, helps communities thrive and fosters healthy waterways and wetlands.

For farmers the Project is automating water delivery across the region. Dethridge Wheels and manual gate and channel systems are being replaced with automatic systems that allow irrigators to get water when and where it's needed.

For environmental and urban water users, water savings bring opportunities and benefits through healthier waterways.

For our region it's a significant contributor to job creation and investment. It creates hundreds of jobs for local contractors, designers, manufacturers and other water related industries.

How Connections was born

Ten years ago, northern Victoria was struggling through the crippling millennium drought.

In 2006, inflows into Goulburn-Murray Water's (GMW) storages hit an all-time low. Just 200GL of water flowed into Lake Eildon – the key storage supplying irrigators on the Goulburn system – in this year.

GMW's ageing infrastructure was inefficient. When the full water allocation could be supplied, an estimated 900GL of water was wasted each year to leakage, seepage and evaporation. In 2008 the Victorian Government committed \$1 billion in funding to ensure a once-in-a-lifetime upgrade of the irrigation infrastructure in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

The upgrade would secure annual water savings of 225GL per annum which would be shared equally between local farmers, Melbourne Water and the environment. On October 18, 2011 the Victorian and Australian governments signed the contract for Stage Two of the Project. As part of the agreement the

Federal Government will provide \$953 million and the Victorian Government \$106 million. Stage Two of the Project will generate an additional 204GL of annual water savings.

On this day it was also announced Victoria would sell its 102GL of water savings to the Commonwealth. The proceeds from this sale would be used to fund Victorian irrigators' contribution to Stage 1 of the project, meaning irrigators would not have to face price rises to cover their share.

Protecting irrigators' water volume

This Project is the key to generating water savings to benefit farmers and the environment. It ensures water for the environment is delivered through savings generated from infrastructure upgrades not water buy-backs. When the Project is complete, an estimated average annual water savings of 429GL will be achieved and irrigation water use efficiency will be increased from 70 per cent to about 85 per cent.

The Reset Delivery Plan

In September 2016 the Project released its Reset Delivery Plan. The Plan was prepared in response to the Mid Term Review of Stage Two of the Project, which found fundamental changes in its approach and delivery was needed to achieve the outputs on time and within budget. The Plan will ensure the Project achieves the required water savings and continues to deliver upgrades to systems and services for water users.

Achievements to date

The Connections Project is one of the largest infrastructure projects in the country. It not only creates benefits for our region's farmers, it's creating hundreds of jobs for local contractors, designers, manufacturers and other water related industries. It is crucial to the sustainability of our region. We have:

- Decommissioned 995km of channel, to improve efficiencies in the delivery network;
- Generated 251GL of annual water savings;
- Remediated 245km of channel to stop leaks, seepage and generate water savings, and;
- Installed 6511 meters to modernise and automate the delivery system.

For more information go to www.connectionsproject.com.au

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