

# Chairman's report

Friday 22 March 2013



Murray Irrigation

This is the Chairman's report, distributed following a meeting of the Murray Irrigation Board of Directors yesterday.

## PIIOP early 2013 works approved

The Board welcomed Richard van Putten, Murray Irrigation's newly appointed Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP) Project Manager to Murray Irrigation and approved a package of early works for implementation during the winter shut down period. The early works project will:

- Replace channel offtake structures along the Mulwala Canal from Lake Mulwala to the Edward River Escape near Deniliquin and along the Berrigan Canal down to and including the Billabong Canal offtake.
- Upgrade, relocate or remove existing Dethridge outlets along these sections of canals depending on the results of customer consultation.

The works will include the installation of technology that will allow remote control and/or automation of both the offtakes and outlets. Major benefits of the proposed works are improved customer service (such as higher flows and shorter starts and stops) and better regulation and water measurement of Murray Irrigation channels.

The Board also approved accelerated investment under PIIOP in remote control and or automation of a number of mechanised gates that are the cause of unacceptably high work health and safety risk to our staff.

Discussion focussed on ensuring PIIOP is implemented on time, on budget, within agreed quality specifications, and safely. In addition the Board emphasised the importance of customer collaboration as Murray Irrigation rolls out its investment in new or upgraded outlets and remote control and automation of regulators.

## End of season closure

The Board considered planning around the date and procedure for the end of season offtake closures and subsequent channel draining. The Board recognises that conditions are relatively dry and anticipates there will be low volumes of water remaining in customer accounts by the end of April. In addition, the PIIOP winter works are a significant program that is reliant on access to the Mulwala and Berrigan Canals.

For these reasons Murray Irrigation is planning to close its offtakes earlier than last year. Customers are advised the offtakes will remain open until **at least Tuesday 30 April** and customers should commence planning for a relatively early end to the season. Further details of the end of season closure and channel draining will be provided in April.

## Remote Control Pilot Project (Pilot Project)

The Board received an update on progress with the rollout of the Pilot Project. Recent developments include:

- Commencement of testing of Murray Irrigation's new online water ordering system including internet and smartphone water ordering before a rollout to all customers at the start of the 2013/14 irrigation season.
- Commencement of testing of a more flexible water supply service available as a result of investment in automation of regulators and outlets.
- Achieving agreement with 100 percent of our customers in the Pilot Project for their outlets' upgrade.

To date customer feedback on the improvements in irrigation supply service available is very positive.

The Board is confident its decision to invest in the Pilot Project has been beneficial. Evaluation of the Pilot Project has commenced with lessons learnt already informing the rollout of Murray Irrigation's PIIOP project.

## Outlet and Meter Strategy

The Board approved an updated Outlet and Meter Strategy. More details will be communicated to all customers in the near future as part of the PIIOP project rollout.

## Advocacy update

Directors reported on recent meetings attended where the focus was largely on the implementation of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan and delivery of environmental water, not unexpectedly significant work remains to minimise the impact of the Basin Plan on Murray Irrigation, our customers and the region.

Noel Graham, Chairman