

Chairman's report



Murray Irrigation

Friday 16 March 2012

The Chairman's report from Murray Irrigation Limited Chairman Stewart Ellis is sent to *Talking Water* recipients following the monthly meeting of the Murray Irrigation Board of Directors. This report provides an update on strategic issues relevant to the management of the company.

Recent rainfall and localised flooding

Over four days (29 February – 3 March) rainfall equal to approximately 800,000ML fell across our landscape east of Deniliquin. This rainfall resulted in significant localised flooding impacting on many farm businesses. It showed the merit of the stormwater escape system largely funded by the Land and Water Management Plan Program. However, operation of the stormwater system was not without challenges for us and some of our customers.

I thank our front line operational staff who worked over the weekend and all last week to assist our customers minimise the negative impacts of the localised flooding on their crops, pastures and farm infrastructure.

Thank you to those customers who have collaborated and communicated constructively with us.

Expression of Interest Commonwealth Water Purchase

The Board has agreed to write a letter of support for all of the expressions of interest received. This letter will be made available to applicants on Monday 19 March.

It is the Board's view that this Commonwealth water purchase initiative is not a strategic water purchase program because it does not deal with Murray Irrigation's water supply infrastructure at the same time as the proposed water sales.

The Board, in agreeing to support all applications, believes the program is poorly designed and placed irrigation infrastructure operators in an impossible position.

Craig Knowles visits Murray Irrigation

Craig Knowles, Chairman of the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA), along with Dr Rhondda Dickson, Chief Executive, Board member Dr Barry Hart and Mary Harwood from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities attended yesterday's Board meeting. Issues discussed included;

1. The proposed reduction in irrigation water use as a result of the proposed Basin Plan is unacceptably high and will have an irreversible impact on this region and our community.
2. The proposed Basin Plan needs to account for the benefits that can be achieved by environmental works and measures and infrastructure investment off river.
3. The proposed Basin Plan needs to be based on existing constraints, which include the Barmah Choke.

National Irrigators' Council (NIC)

NIC meets in Canberra next week. In recent weeks NIC has visited many of its members to discuss the proposed Basin Plan; this included visiting the Lower Lakes and Coorong, last week. What is clear across the Basin is a growing enthusiasm for investigation of how changes to in-stream infrastructure can be made to achieve better environmental outcomes, therefore decreasing the volume that is to be removed from irrigated agriculture. Basin communities need to build on this enthusiasm to generate interest from across the Basin to have environmental works and measures investigated and funded by government.

Finally, I ask all of our customers to help by making a submission to the MDBA regarding the Murray Darling Basin Plan. They are due to the MDBA on Monday 16 April 2012.

Stewart Ellis
Chairman