

Chairman's report

Friday 17 February 2012



Murray Irrigation

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.

Customer meetings

I appreciate the effort of our customers to attend our recent customer meetings. At these meetings we received many positive comments and were asked valuable questions about the range of activities we are starting to implement. These activities all aim to ensure Murray Irrigation remains a viable business whilst continuing to provide customers with an affordable water supply that meets their farm business needs.

There is significant interest from customers about our Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program (PIIOP) funding offer from the Commonwealth Government as well as the remote control pilot project in the Blighty area.

Input from customers is important to the successful implementation of our activities. I encourage those customers in the remote control pilot area to attend the information meeting on Monday 20 February.

I am also looking forward to receiving feedback at a customer consultation meeting we are holding on Wednesday 22 February with representatives from landholder associations and industry groups to discuss customer requirements from a new water ordering program and seeking customer input into a review of the Water Distribution Rules Policy.

I remind customers the deadline for written responses to the Network Consultation Paper (NCP) is 5pm, Monday 20 February. Providing a written submission to the NCP is your opportunity to comment about our proposed service levels and fees and prices. Responses can be emailed to ncp@murrayirrigation.com.au, delivered to either the Deniliquin or Finley Office, or sent via facsimile to 03 5898 3301.

Water availability and outlook

The Board made no change to the water efficiency allocation or the allocation plus carryover limit.

The Board expects there is likely to be a significant volume of water remaining on-farm for carryover to 2012/13, even with potential deliveries of 900,000ML this season. Customers are reminded that the maximum volume of carryover from this year to next year is 50 percent of Class C (general security) water entitlements. Customers are encouraged to consider their water use and potential carryover volumes.

The outlook for water availability next year is positive with a major flood in the Darling River filling the Menindee Lakes, whilst Hume and Dartmouth Dams retain relatively high storage levels. Murray Irrigation has requested the NSW Office of Water provide information about the outlook for 2012/13 as soon as possible to assist irrigators make business decisions.

Proposed Basin Plan

Murray Irrigation welcomed Tom Chesson, CEO of National Irrigators' Council and Andrew Gregson CEO of NSW Irrigators' Council to the Board meeting. Their participation is important to ensuring our collective efforts to seek changes to the proposed Basin Plan are co-ordinated. I emphasise the importance of the irrigation industry and the community to continue to speak with a single voice about the proposed Basin Plan – the Basin Plan's proposed reductions of 2,750GL are too big, environmentally unjustified, undeliverable, and would decimate our communities.

At a local level, the Murray Group of Concerned Communities (MGCC) is continuing to promote awareness of the importance of this issue to our community and will open a "Community Submissions Centre" at the junction of Cressy and End Streets, Deniliquin. The Centre will officially be opened at noon on Monday 20 February. It will be staffed between 10.00am and 2.00pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday for the remainder of the consultation period, which ends on Monday 16 April. Individuals will be able access information about the proposed Basin Plan and how you can make a submission.

