

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Water



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FIGHT AGAINST SALINITY PAYS OFF FOR MALLEE IRRIGATORS

Victoria's work to manage salinity is starting to pay off for Mallee irrigators with the annual salinity impact charge on irrigation falling by 24 per cent in 2021, saving irrigators up to \$2,500 a year.

Minister for Water Lisa Neville said the price drop showed efforts to reduce salinity over recent years have had a positive impact – reducing the severity of the problem and that will be reflected in a reduction in charges.

The recent Salinity Impact Charges review found improved irrigation practices and salinity mitigation activities, enabling Victoria to cut the cost to landholders of managing the impact of irrigation across the Mallee landscape.

Reducing these costs will save irrigators on average between \$150 - \$2,500 a year, while ensuring Victoria continues to meet its salinity management obligations under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement and is addressing localised salinity impacts.

Community consultation on the recommendations from the review of the Salinity Impact Charges was conducted in November 2020.

The consultation heard that irrigators supported reducing the annual charges while leaving the capital salinity impact charges unchanged.

Salinity Impact Charges were first introduced in 1994 to meet the State's obligations under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement salinity strategies.

In 2019, amendments were made to the Water Act recognising that the salinity impacts from irrigation can be seen on the floodplains and landscapes in the Mallee region as well as affecting the water quality in the Murray River.

The review of salinity impact charges in the Mallee delivers on the measures announced in the Victorian Government's 'Water for Victoria' policy.

Quotes attributable to the Minister for Water Lisa Neville

"We are working with Mallee irrigators to support a strong, productive irrigation industry while tackling salinity to protect the health of our environment."

"The hard work over recent decades has paid off – reducing the impact of salinity in the landscape so we can now pass on benefits to irrigators through reduced charges."

"Irrigated agriculture is hugely valuable to Victoria and it's great to see all the hard work we've done on salinity mitigation so far is working – allowing money to flow back into the hands of the irrigators who need it."