

IRRIGATION UPGRADES DELIVERED



Above: The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP and Andrew McConville, CEO of the MDBA, on their recent visit to Mildura inspecting the channel lining works completed as part of the recent winter shutdown.

I am pleased to confirm that more than four kilometres of irrigation channels have been repaired and upgraded, and more than 40 old Dethridge wheels removed, as part of the first stage of the Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP).

The \$37.9 million project is funded by the Australian Government and is being delivered by Lower Murray Water.

During the recent winter works period, just over 3km of channel was lined in the Red Cliffs district, along Cocklin Avenue and the Calder Highway, and 1km of channel in the Mildura district, near Dewry Avenue and Fourteenth Street.

These works included significant repairs to the existing concrete before the liner was installed in the channels. The works will increase the efficiency of water delivery for irrigators, extend the lifespan of irrigation infrastructure and support the ongoing agricultural productivity of the region.

- ✓ 4.2km channel lined or replaced with a pipeline
- ✓ 42 old Dethridge wheels removed
- ✓ Winter works completed on schedule
- ✓ 300ML of water saved each year by the works completed to date

Importantly, water savings delivered by the project are also on target, with the recently completed works providing 300 ML of water savings per year. These savings will be transferred to the Australian Government as water for the environment under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

It is expected the project will generate a further 1.5GL of water savings for the environment, with additional water achieved upon completion to be shared between Traditional Owners, and urban water security for Mallee towns.

It has been satisfying to see the works roll out knowing that the project is providing much needed upgrades to the irrigation channels and providing a long-term improvement to the efficiency of delivering irrigation water, at no cost to growers.

Thank you to the landholders and irrigators who worked with us to allow the works to be completed - we could not have done this without your support. And sincere thanks to the SWEP project team, the construction contractors we worked with, and the broader team at Lower Murray Water.

We now look forward to completing works on customer outlets over the Spring and Summer period, and planning for a significant channel works program in winter next year. We will be consulting with affected customers to plan and coordinate these works.

Daniel Freitag - Project Director



Above: Channel lining works completed this winter at Red Cliffs

MUCH-NEEDED CHANNEL WORKS



Above: This photo shows the state of the irrigation channels before the channel works were undertaken. In several locations, the old concrete was cracked and in a bad state of disrepair, leaking water.



Above: As part of the works, the channels were cleaned and repaired. In some areas, where the concrete was in very poor condition, the existing concrete was removed and new concrete installed. Once the channel was repaired, new heavy duty reinforced liner was installed to prevent seepage and increase the efficiency of water delivery.



Above: Channels lined under SWEP have been fenced to improve safety.

WHEELING OUT THE OLD

The removal of outdated irrigation infrastructure is underway as part of SWEP, with 42 Dethridge wheels removed.

It is an important part of the project, as the old water wheels are weak points in the irrigation network, more likely to break and cause major water leakages. Where the wheels are still in use, the redundant infrastructure is being replaced with upgraded water meters.

The removal of around 279 Dethridge wheels will be undertaken over the next 12 months, with the project team working closely with landholders to arrange access and undertake the works.

Any local historical societies or organisations interested in having a Dethridge wheel for display purposes can request one by contacting Lower Murray Water.



Above: A Dethridge wheel to be removed as part of the SWEP.

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Will SWEP increase the cost of water?

No. As SWEP involves off-farm efficiency works that do not reduce the consumptive pool, it will have no impact on the cost of water.

The project is funded in full by the Australian Government.

Did this project undergo a socioeconomic assessment?

Yes. Socioeconomic consultation of the Project was open between 19 November and 10 December 2021 on the Engage Victoria website. All public feedback was considered in the Minister for Water's socio-economic assessment of the project.

The project was supported for submission under the Commonwealth Off-farm Efficiency Program following the Minister for Water's determination that the project meets the socioeconomic criteria for water recovery projects.