



Closing the Loop

What we heard from the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District community on the distribution of the irrigators' share

ISCC

**Irrigators' Share
Consultative Committee**

VICTORIA
State
Government

ISCC

**Irrigators' Share
Consultative Committee**

Author

Prepared by the Victorian Government, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, on behalf of the Irrigators' Share Consultative Committee.

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Contents

Thank you.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Background	2
The Connections Project.....	2
The irrigator's share	2
Irrigators' Share Consultative Committee	3
Proposing a distribution model	3
ISCC proposed distribution model	4
Summary of feedback	5
Consultation activities	5
Who we heard from.....	6
What we heard	8
Merits of the proposed model.....	8
Drawbacks of the proposed model	10
Other survey questions and responses	13
GMW allocation-based distribution	13
Proposed threshold for receiving water shares	14
Financial benefits as credit on GMW bill.....	15
Timing of issuing the irrigators' share	15
Feedback outside the ISCC's scope	16
What's next.....	17

Thank you

The Irrigators' Share Consultative Committee (ISCC) would like to thank the irrigation community in the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID) for providing their feedback and comments on the committee's proposed approach for distributing the irrigators' share.

We acknowledge the unusual circumstances created by social distancing measures due to COVID-19 and appreciate the willingness and efforts of the community to participate in the online approaches we undertook to hear from delivery share holders.

The feedback from the community has directly informed the Committee's final recommendation to the Minister for Water.

Introduction

This report has been prepared by the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP) on behalf of the Irrigators Share Consultative Committee (ISCC) to outline the outcomes of consultation with delivery share holders in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID).

Consultation was held from 20 April to 1 June 2020 on the ISCC's proposed approach to the distribution of the irrigators' share of water recovered under Stage 1 of the Connections Project.

Background

The Connections Project

The Connections Project is a major initiative to modernise the infrastructure that delivers water to irrigators in the GMID. Irrigation system modernisation works recover water through reducing how much water is lost through things like evaporation, seepage and leakage from irrigation channels.

Now nearing completion, the Connections Project has been developed in two stages, with Stage 1 committed to recovering 225 GL of water in terms of long-term annual average yield (LTAAY) to be shared equitably between GMID irrigators, Melbourne water retailers and the environment.

Long-term annual average yield (LTAAY) reflects the variability of recovered losses depending on seasonal conditions. This means that the amount of water recovered will be less in some years, and more in other years, to average out at 225 GL over time. The long-term average annual yield can be calculated for all high-reliability and low-reliability water shares in Northern Victoria

Another 204 GL LTAAY is being recovered under Stage 2, as a mix of high and low reliability entitlements. As part of the contractual arrangement for Stage 2, these entitlements were issued to the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder in advance of the works to recover the works.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning advises that the Connections Project is on track to recover the full volume of 429 GL LTAAY and distribute entitlements to the remaining recipients.

The irrigator's share

When the original business case for the Connections Project was developed in 2008, the Victorian Government committed to returning up to 75 GL (LTAAY) each to the environment, to the Melbourne urban water retailers who contributed funding to the project, and to GMID irrigators who contribute to the costs of operating and maintaining the irrigation system.

The up to 75 GL (LTAAY) of water being returned to irrigators is referred to as the 'irrigators' share'.

The irrigators' share will be made up of a mix of high-reliability water shares (HRWS) and low-reliability water shares (LRWS) from the Goulburn and Murray systems that add up to 75 GL LTAAY. The mix of HRWS and LRWS reflects the combination of fixed and variable water losses that have been recovered through modernisation works. This means that the amount of water available will vary from year to year, averaging out at around 75 GL.

The water recovered to date toward the irrigators' share has underwritten the operation of the irrigation system while works have been undertaken, protecting the integrity of existing entitlements. Using the irrigators' share this way was part of the Stage 2 agreement that meant entitlements could be issued the issued up-front to the Commonwealth. This decision has meant that water recovered toward the irrigators' share cannot yet be provided to irrigators. The ISCC is calling for the irrigators' share to be made available to irrigators as soon as it is possible to do so while ensuring that existing entitlements remain fully protected.

Irrigators' Share Consultative Committee

The ISCC was announced by the Minister for Water in June 2019 and tasked with providing the Minister a recommended approach for distributing the irrigators' share.

The Minister will decide the final distribution model for the irrigators' share, taking into consideration the recommendation made by the ISCC.

The ISCC is made up of appointed members, who have decision-making responsibilities, and non-appointed members, who provide information to the Committee and undertake work to support the Committee's tasks.

Appointed voting members represent the GMID irrigation community (Table 1).

Table 1: Membership of the Irrigators' Share Consultative Committee

Independent chair	Paul Weller
	Peter Hacon (Central Goulburn)
	John Nelson (Loddon Valley)
Chairs of GMW's Water Services Committees	Craig Reynolds (Shepparton)
	Georgie Simms (Rochester)
	Jason Andrew (Murray Valley)
	Ann Hodge (Torrumbarry)
Victorian Farmers' Federation Water Council	Natalie Akers
	Richard Anderson

The non-appointed members are representatives from DELWP, Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) and the Connections Project, along with an independent subject matter expert. These members have no decision-making role and have been supporting the ISCC with specialist knowledge, analysis and advice, on matters requested by the Committee's members.

The Terms of Reference for the ISCC, and the principles that underpin its decision-making, are available online at engage.vic.gov.au/irrigators-share.

Proposing a distribution model

The ISCC put forward a proposal for consultation on the distribution of the irrigators' share. The proposed distribution model has been developed based on indicative data provided by DELWP on the likely mix of high-reliability and low-reliability water shares and the source trading zones that will make up the irrigators' share.

This data was derived from the audited water recovery to date and Connections Project forecasts for remaining on ground works and may change as the final water recovery is verified.

The committee is not involved in determining the make-up of the irrigators' share or when it will be made available to GMID irrigators. The responsibility for confirming the water recovered and the processes for converting the recovered water into appropriate entitlements lies with DELWP.

On 20 April the ISCC released their proposed distribution model for the irrigators' share, which can be found on the [Engage Victoria website](https://engage.vic.gov.au/irrigators-share).

ISCC proposed distribution model

Once-off distribution of the irrigators' share issued to recipients as water shares in proportion to the amount of delivery share held.

Financial benefits were recommended for very small delivery share holders

≥ 0.25ML/day receive water shares

< 0.25 ML/day receive a financial benefit equivalent to the value of the water share volume

Summary of feedback

We sought to hear from people holding delivery share within the six gravity areas of the GMID, as these delivery share holders support the ongoing maintenance and operation costs of the irrigation infrastructure being upgraded through the Connections Project and would be the recipients of the irrigators' share.

The public consultation was critical to the ISCC being able to present a final recommendation to the Minister for Water that has been tested with the GMID irrigation community.

Public consultation was held from the 20th April until the 1st June 2020. The Victorian Government and the committee received 200 completed feedback forms and two written submissions, as well as holding discussions and answering community questions through two virtual town hall events and one-on-one conversations.

The Chair of the committee attended the virtual town hall meetings, along with DELWP presenters and subject matter experts.

Due to social distancing measures in place during the COVID-19 pandemic, all planned consultation events had to be undertaken virtually.

Consultation activities

We published a factsheet outlining the proposed distribution model and detailed questions and answers to inform community input, as well as using GMW networks and newspaper advertising to inform GMID irrigators of the process and direct them to the ISCC's Engage Victoria page.

A feedback survey on the Engage Victoria website asked for input on what merits and drawbacks delivery share holders saw of the proposed distribution model. People were also asked questions about the details of how it would work – like the suggested threshold level for receiving water shares or a financial benefit.

To provide delivery share holders an opportunity to ask questions about the approach, two virtual public town hall events were organised. The events were attended by more than 100 people.

A copy of the feedback form can be found on the [Engage Victoria](#) website.

During the consultation period, the Engage Victoria website was visited by over 4,000 individuals and had almost 6,000 views. In total, 200 feedback forms were submitted. We received two written submissions, along with further input and insights through the virtual town hall events and one-on-one phone calls.

The committee considered all comments, questions and suggestions received from GMID delivery share holders before we finalised our recommendation to the Minister for Water.



200 Survey responses

2 Written submissions

2 virtual Town Hall events

Who we heard from

Our online survey asked respondents to indicate which irrigation area they were from, the size of their delivery share and their industry. This was included so we could understand different peoples' perspectives. Breakdowns of who filled out the survey are presented in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3 below.

Through the surveys, we heard from a largely representative group of delivery share holders across both different irrigation areas and agricultural industries. Although delivery share holders with delivery share less than 0.25 ML/day (the proposed threshold) represent about half of all delivery share holders, they made up only about 20% of the respondents of the online survey.

We also heard from people during the two virtual town hall events, as well as 2 written submissions and phone calls to members of the ISCC.

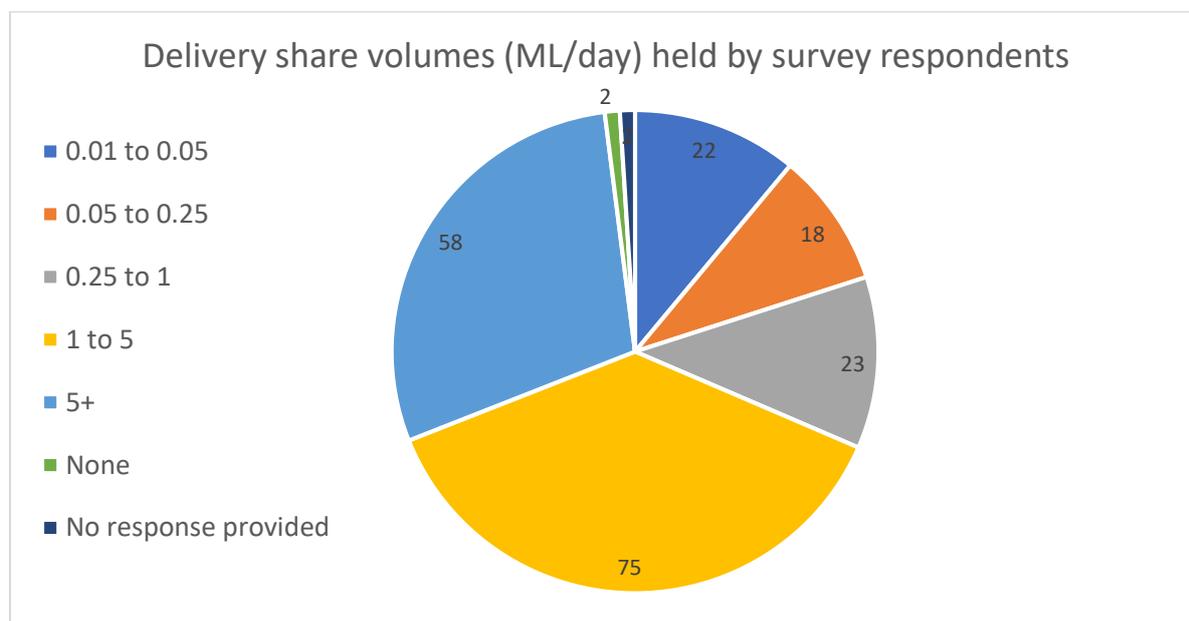


Figure 1: Breakdown of survey respondents by the volume of delivery share held

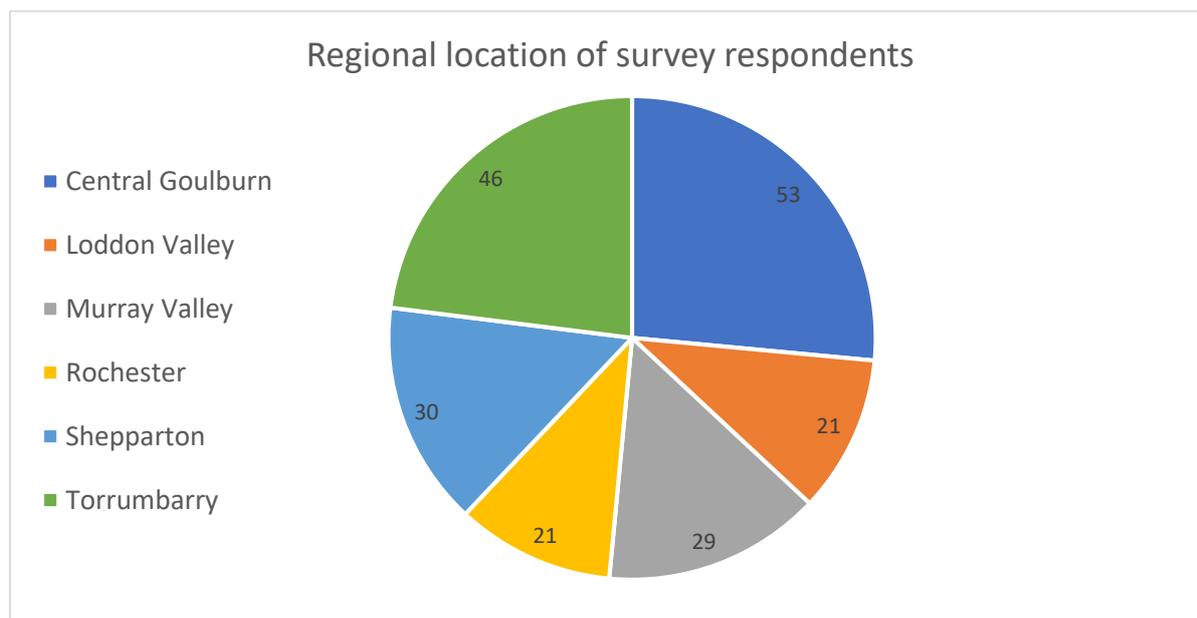


Figure 2: Breakdown of survey respondents by irrigation area

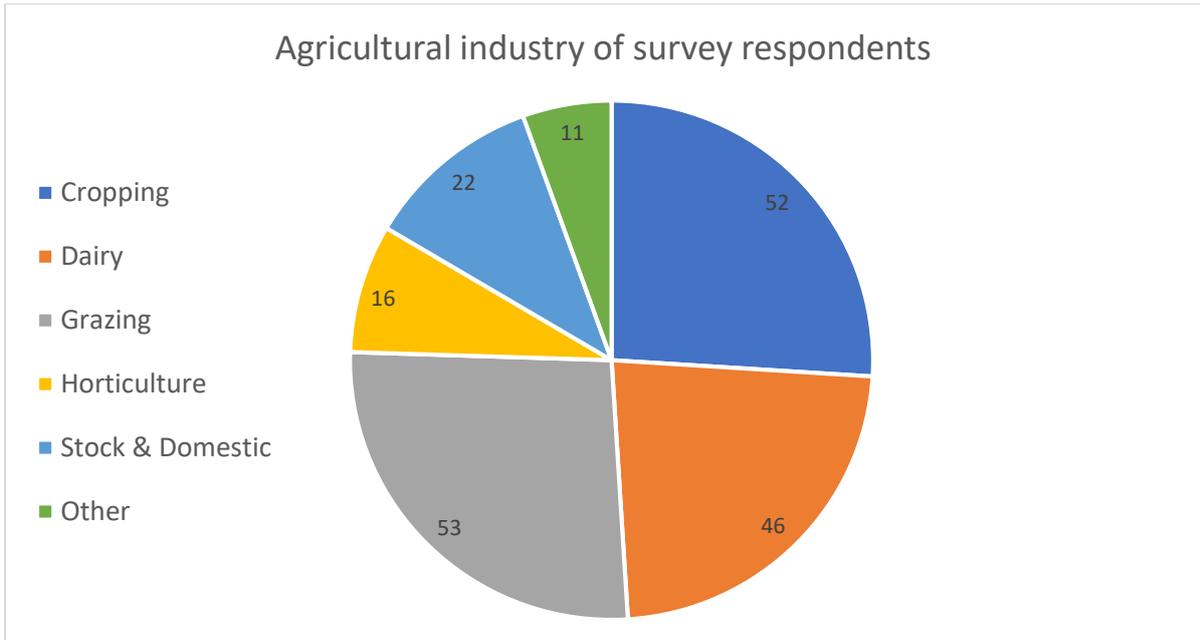


Figure 3: Breakdown of survey respondents by agricultural industry

What we heard

We developed a proposal for public consultation that reflected the decisions we made as a committee and the information and investigations we undertook about the different distribution options.

Once-off distribution of the irrigators' share issued to recipients as water shares in proportion to the amount of delivery share held.

Financial benefits were recommended for very small delivery share holders

≥ 0.25ML/day receive water shares

< 0.25 ML/day receive a financial benefit equivalent to the value of the water share

Analysis showed that those with less than 0.25 ML/day delivery share would be better off receiving a financial benefit as the costs for them to administer such small parcels of water outweigh the actual value of the water.

That led us to propose that delivery share holders below the 0.25 ML/day threshold receive financial benefits to the equivalent value of the water shares they would otherwise be entitled to. This could be made as a credit on their GMW bills.

We asked people about their perspectives on the proposal, other options that were considered by the committee and whether the principles we'd used to come up with our proposal were right. We also looked for people's views on the importance of when the distribution should happen.

Our proposal received both positive feedback and criticism, with the majority of respondents considering the proposed distribution approach as fair and practical.

Where people had concerns, the most common issues raised were about the inclusion of GMW's pumped districts, historic delivery share holdings and other views about whether people below the 0.25 ML/day threshold should receive water shares.

We also heard strong views from the community about the potential implications of the chosen distribution model for termination of delivery shares in the future, as well as ongoing costs to irrigators of maintaining and operating a GMID which is viable in the long-term.

Additionally, we heard people's views on issues which are outside of what the committee has been convened to do. These were the make-up of the water shares, timing and fairness of implementation between irrigators, environmental water holders and Melbourne retailers, and broader water market issues and impacts.

Merits of the proposed model

Feedback through the online survey was predominantly positive, with strong support for our proposed model from respondents.

Most people identified at least one strength with the proposed distribution model (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

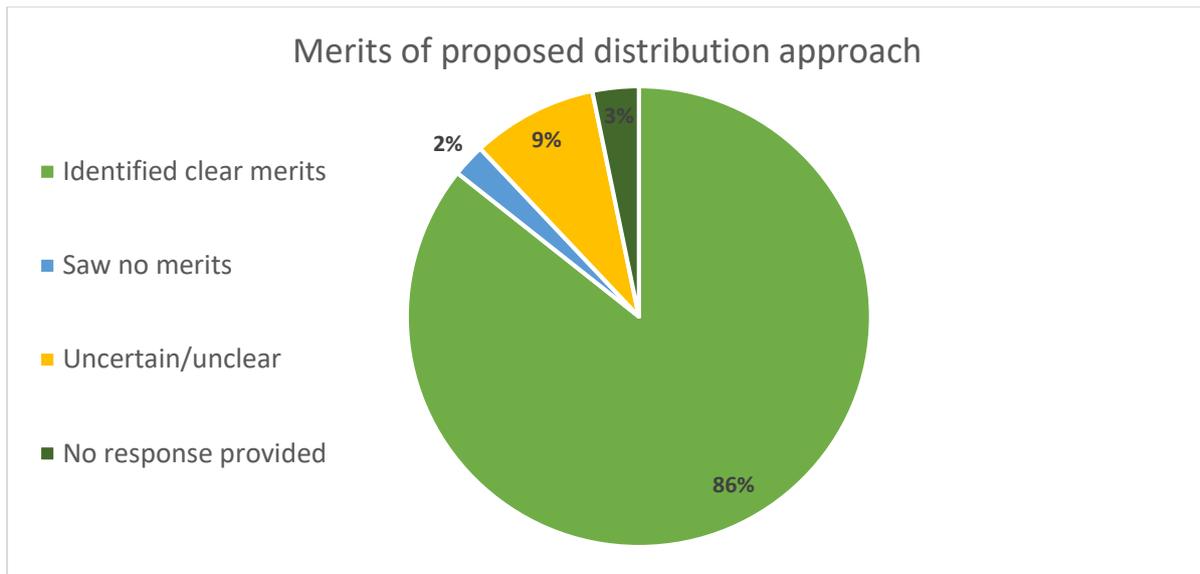


Figure 4: Breakdown of survey responses on the merits of the proposed model

When asked for more detail, people told us what they thought about different aspects of the proposed model (Table 2). The most common things people liked about the proposed model are described below.

Table 2: Breakdown of survey responses by merits of the proposed model

Merits of the proposed model	Number of positive responses
Practical and fair approach	83
The rewards reflect the contribution made toward the system	48
Enhanced water security for delivery share holders	27
Proposal fulfils the original promises made by government	9
Financial credit proposed would be valuable	8
The proposal supports individuals to make their own choices	4
Uncertain or unsure of the merits	4
The approach has no merits	5
Responses that could not be classified	15
No response provided	7

Practical and fair approach: 38% of people told us they thought the proposed model was a practical, simple and fair approach. This response from the community indicates that the committee’s model meets community expectations and aligns with the core principle that “the approach will balance fairness and efficiency, with emphasis on the simplicity of concept, implementation and ongoing operation.”

“There are no easy quick fix solutions here, but the proposal distribution is probably the fairest and ‘least complicated’ way of handling those water savings.”

“It is a simple and transparent model that should see the water used to support the families of our region that depend on water and have suffered in recent years through low allocation.”

The rewards reflect the contribution made toward the system: 22% of people told us they thought the proposed model would reward the people who have been contributing to the system. Respondents clearly showed that they support providing benefits back directly to irrigators on the basis of the amount of delivery share they hold.

"I think the proposed approach is very desirable. Delivery share holders pay to maintain the channel system so as a matter of equity they should share the benefits of the return of water. Delivery shares seems to be a simple and understandable method of apportionment."

"The customers holding the burden of delivery shares to maintain the system will be rewarded."

Enhanced water security for delivery share holders: We heard that issuing water shares would increase water security for delivery share holders, supporting agricultural production and helping farm enterprises.

"The major benefit is the return of water savings to those actually using water."

"Ensures irrigators that need water for food production receive water or financial gain"

Proposal fulfils the original promises made by government: We heard that the proposed model aligns with community expectations regarding how the benefits of the irrigators' share would be distributed.

"Irrigators were promised water shares. Melbourne and the environment got their share. Time to keep the promise."

"Honours State Government's original undertaking that benefits be in the form of water share. Small delivery share holders receiving \$ is a sensible modification as it gives highest yield."

Financial credit proposed would be valuable: We heard that the suggested financial credit for delivery share holders under a certain threshold would be a beneficial approach.

"Farmers will benefit from either having extra water to use or not having to pay for their next bill. Definitely a positive in both situations"

"As a holder of less than 0.25 [ML/day of delivery share] then a credit on the account would be great. It would be nice not to have to find money for the GMW account for a couple of years."

Drawbacks of the proposed model

While almost half of the people that completed a survey saw no drawbacks with the proposed distribution model, 44% sought to clarify details of the model, raised concerns or suggested refinements. Many people had mixed views and saw both benefits and drawbacks, showing the different ways to look at how the irrigators' share could be distributed.

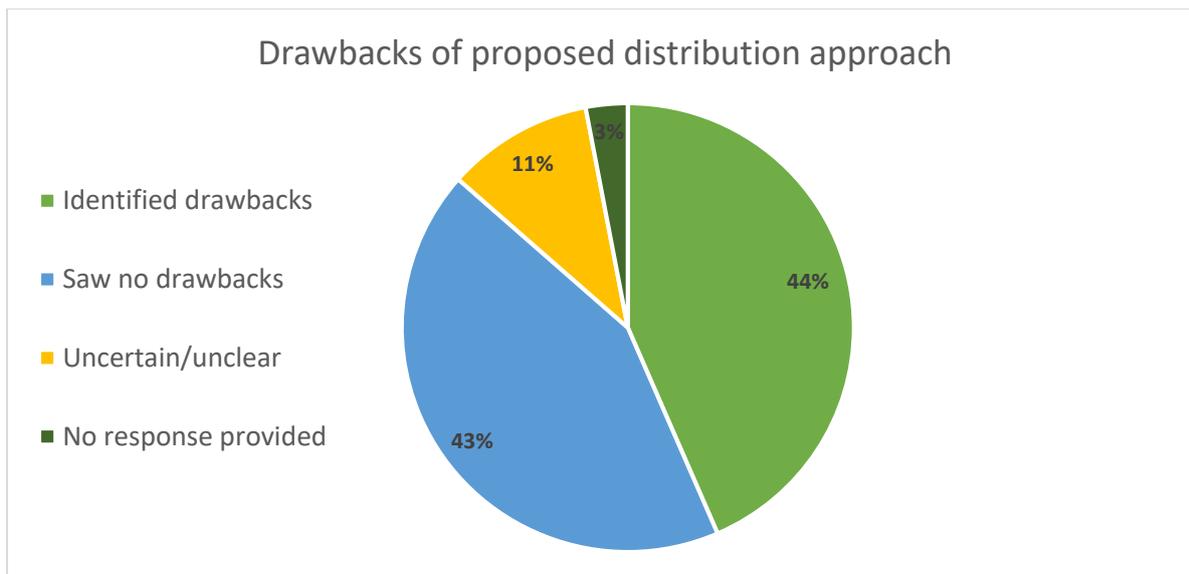


Figure 5: Breakdown of survey responses on the drawbacks of the proposed model

When asked for more detail, people told us that they thought about different aspects of the proposed model (Table 3). The most common things thought of as drawbacks of the proposed model are described below.

Table 3: Breakdown of survey responses by drawbacks of the proposed model

Drawbacks of the proposed model	Number of positive responses
No drawbacks to the approach	86
The proposal does not prevent water from leaving the GMID or tie it to the land	23
Those below the proposed delivery share threshold should be able to opt to receive water shares	16
The approach contributes to risks of delivery share termination and/or increased future costs	11
Concerns regarding eligibility	11
The approach takes too long to distribute benefits	7
Uncertain or unsure of the drawbacks	7
Drawbacks or issues nominated that are beyond the ISCC's scope	8
Responses that could not be classified	10
No response provided	6

Securing long-term benefit for the GMID: We heard from many people in the community that believe it is in the long term interest of the GMID to ensure that that water from the irrigators share could not be traded out of the district. This feedback reflects the importance of the committee's core principle that the approach taken should support the long-term, collective future of the GMID.

Issuing water shares to individuals does mean that people can decide what they want to do with their water shares and water allocations. This is the same as for all other water shares, which can be freely traded, providing consistency across all water products and markets.

We understand the concerns raised by the community and the committee also believes that issuing water shares provides a model that is simple to understand and implement, is cost-effective to manage, does not increase red tape, and maintains the existing management of water entitlements.

Victoria is bound by water trading rules under the Commonwealth Water Act (2007) that set out that the trade of water, including issuing seasonal allocations, cannot be restricted or preference people with delivery share. We are committed to continuing to consider how we can contribute to capitalising on this opportunity to provide lasting benefits to the GMID while working within the legal and regulatory frameworks that apply in the Victorian Murray-Darling Basin.

“Water can be sold out of the region providing a benefit only to individuals but no gain to the broader irrigation community - now or in the future.”

“A one-off distribution only benefits the person who owns the delivery share at a point in time and does not provide an ongoing benefit to the person who owns and pays for the delivery share each year. With current trends of the baby boomers selling up and retaining the water, the one of distribution just gives them another cherry on top, rather than assists those getting into farming in the future, yet will have to pay the delivery share that goes with farms in this area.”

Opportunity to choose water or financial benefit: We heard a range of views about the 0.25 ML/day threshold, with some people seeking the ability for recipients to decide for themselves whether to receive water shares or a financial benefit, or calling for all recipients to receive the same benefit – either water or money.

We understand the importance of choice to people in the GMID and need to consider what choices can be provided, understanding that allocating very small volume water shares, or providing everyone with a choice, would increase the complexity and cost of distributing the irrigators share, and would also increase the time required to issue the benefits to irrigators.

“The biggest drawback is smaller landowners not getting water shares.”

“I think that every individual should get a choice of how they want to recoup the savings that best works for them. Smaller farms still may not want more water share and would prefer bill credit. In these uncertain times we cannot be sure of getting an allocation, but we will always receive a bill.”

Termination risks/increasing future costs: We heard that some respondents were worried about issuing water shares that people can then sell, which could create opportunities for some individuals to sell their water and use the proceeds to fund termination of their delivery share.

This feedback links to broader concerns about the long-term viability of the GMID and the committee has requested further consideration of the potential for terminations. This issue is related to the outcomes of the delivery share review, which found that strategic terminations of delivery shares could reduce long-term costs if it supported asset rationalisation. DELWP and GMW are carrying on this work which aligns to the GMW Transformation process.

Two percent of survey respondents indicated that they intended to terminate their delivery share in the next five years and 8% plan to reduce their delivery share in the next five years.

“Irrigators selling their entitlement and dissolving their delivery shares leaving less irrigators to shoulder the cost of running the system.”

“Encourages the distribution to be used to terminate delivery share in non-strategic areas, in turn risking private and public owned stranded assets.”

Eligible irrigators: We heard that distributing the irrigators' share based on delivery share held at a yet-to-be-determined census date could unfairly exclude some groups like people who had delivery share terminated as part of their Connections Agreements.

We also heard from people who wanted the GMID pumped districts to be included in the distribution of the irrigators' share. GMW's pumped districts are not being upgraded through the Connections Project and those irrigators hold capacity share, not delivery share.

The committee will ensure that the principles regarding eligibility are clear and transparent, setting out who will receive the irrigators' share and why.

"It may be possible that there are some irrigators who have been removed from the connected network, but who are still diverters, that may miss out on receiving any share of the savings, or a financial benefit from it. Not sure that this is fair."

"It financially disadvantages some areas who were never given such opportunities; this includes those involved in the Woorinen Pipeline Project which is also a part of the GMW - and who appear to have been ignored by the ISCC. This seems ludicrous as these irrigators have had to endure the same infrastructure costs to their business."

Other survey questions and responses

GMW allocation-based distribution

The survey we put out for consultation explored community perspectives on another model that had been investigated by the committee before they put out their proposal approach for community feedback.

We asked people if they would support GMW holding entitlements issued through the irrigators' share and using them to underpin increased seasonal allocations to all Victorian entitlement holders on an annual basis. Allocation increases would be provided to all water holders, including the environment and others who do not hold GMID delivery share.

This approach was considered by the committee as a way to retain the water within the GMID for the long term that could meet the requirements of the Commonwealth Water Act and Basin Plan trading rules.

We heard that the vast majority of people were unwilling to support this alternative approach (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

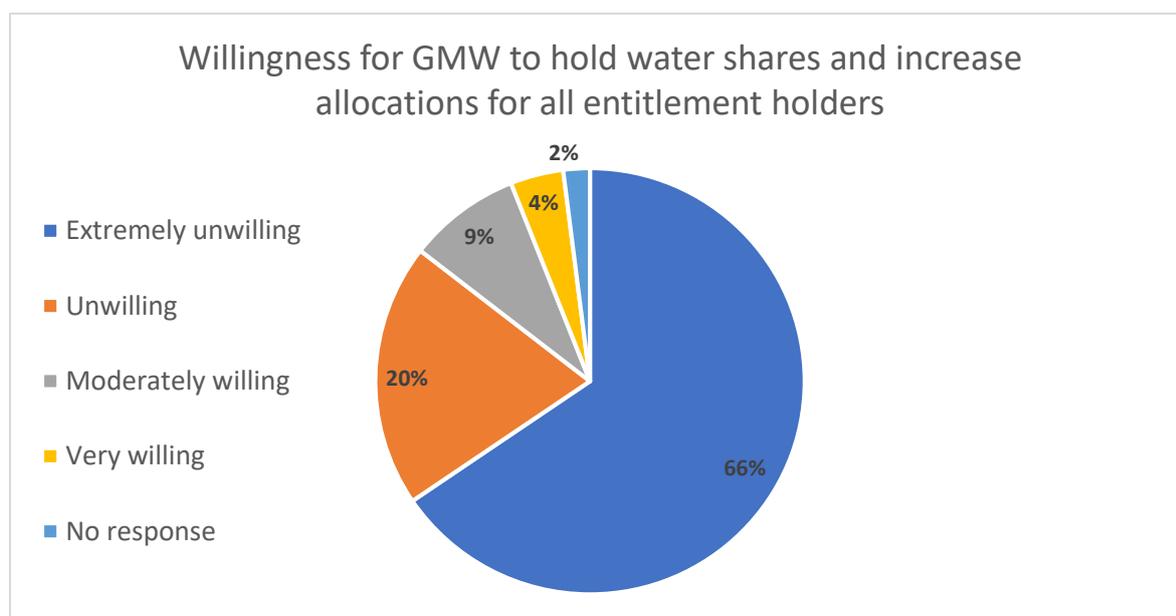


Figure 6: Breakdown of survey responses by willingness for alternative model to increase seasonal allocations

When we asked for more detail about why people were willing or unwilling to support this concept, we heard that the key reasons it wasn't supported were that:

- it provides benefits to those who don't contribute to the system,
- it is a breach of trust and prior commitments,
- it allows the environment to benefit twice,
- it is not the best approach to support farm enterprises and food production.

Those who did support this approach told us that they thought it could retain the water within the GMID, and people could receive additional allocation each year without the costs associated with water shares.

“Our region is already suffering due to the loss of water to the environmental water holder and non-irrigators. The environmental water holder has already received their share of the saved water and non-irrigators owning water share are a blight on our communities.”

“Not fair on farmers who own the water and not fair for GMW to gain someone else’s asset at the farmers expense. NO LAND NO WATER ENTITLEMENTS”

“Increased seasonal allocations has ongoing benefits for all. We support this proposal and feel it gives the best long-term benefits.”

Proposed threshold for receiving water shares

After our investigations and analysis, we suggested that a threshold of 0.25 ML/day delivery share could be the most appropriate for determining who would receive water shares or equivalent financial benefits.

This threshold rate was suggested because based on the current understanding of water being recovered to underpin the irrigators’ share, the volume of HRWS for people holding less than 0.25 ML/day would be below 1 ML (and LRWS below 0.5 ML).

The committee discussed a threshold and considered that 1 ML would be the minimum parcel size that provides real value to recipients. The value of smaller parcels of water would be eroded by the administrative costs of issuing many small water shares.

Most respondents supported the threshold level proposed, including the majority of respondents with delivery share below the threshold rate (Figure 4).

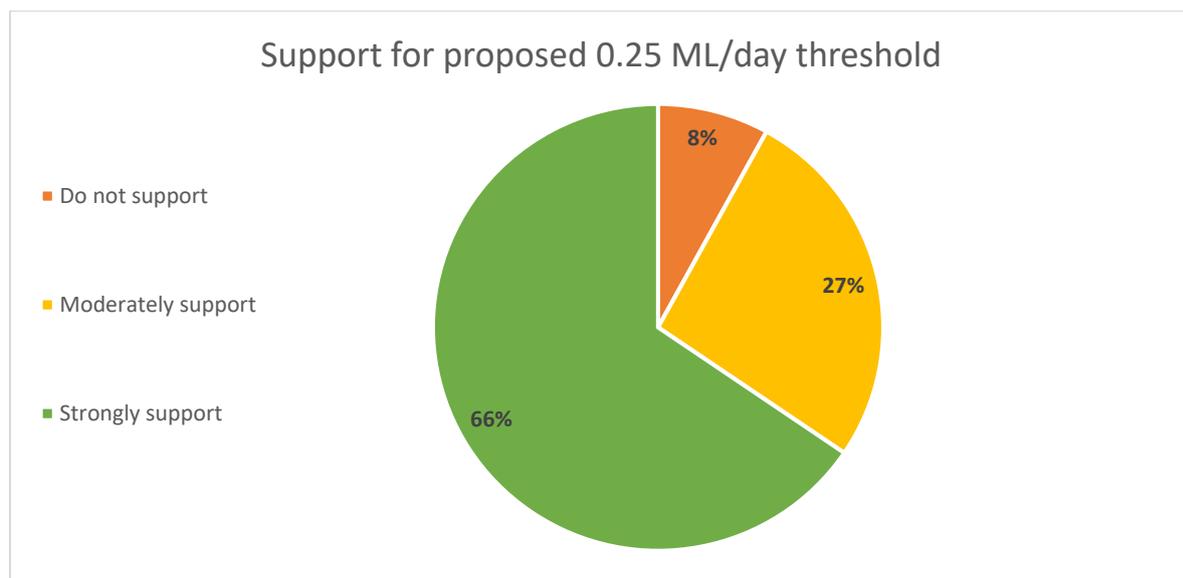


Figure 7: Breakdown of survey responses by support for the 0.25 ML/day threshold

Respondents who disagreed with the threshold suggested a higher threshold of 0.50 ML/day, or that the receiver should be given the option to choose between water shares and financial benefit as they see fit.

“Easiest and least expensive way to distribute shares to small holders”

“As a domestic and stock customer that has 2 ML and used 2 ML do not want a tiny portion of water that is no use to me. As a low user prefer the one of credit on the bill.”

“I think there should be no threshold and whether you have a 0.01 ML/day or 100 ML/day, the formula should be the same. I don't think the underlying principles change with a change in delivery share.”

Financial benefits as credit on GMW bill

For delivery share holders with less than 0.25 GL/day who would receive their share of the benefit as a financial benefit, it was suggested that this could be provided as a credit on the delivery share holders' annual GMW bill.

Providing the financial benefit as a credit on people's bills allow for a very simple and affordable process, as no personal details such as bank accounts would have to be collected.

We heard that most respondents were supportive of this approach.

Where people supported a financial benefit below the 0.25 ML/day threshold, some people did not agree that this financial benefit should be distributed as a bill credit.

Among the respondents who fell under the proposed threshold rate, around half indicated a strong support for the GMW bill credit proposal, and about a third did not support the approach. Some indicated a preference to receive cash to better support individual business decisions.

“Credits on GMW bills satisfies the regional benefit criteria of the project and flows on to all customers.”

“Bill credits is as good as cash. Supports GMW cashflow and reduces debt recovery amount. Saves cost of distributing cash. Sensible”

“Why not make a payment to the irrigator, if they them want to purchase additional water with the benefit they could.”

Timing of issuing the irrigators' share

We heard that a large majority of respondents consider the timing of the distribution important to them.

For people who told us timing was important, some respondents told us why – with around half of those telling us the issuing of the irrigators' share should happen as soon as possible, and around half telling us that certainty and getting the process right was more important.

Those with a focus on certainty and process emphasises the importance for business planning and the need to ensure issuing of water shares aligned with the water year and seasonal determination processes.

“Need it now. Melbourne and the environment have been getting their water for years, can’t understand why GMID customers aren’t treated equally.”

“Certainty is needed around when this will occur. It will be beneficial but not a significant change or impact on business”

“Timing is everything. Informing all stakeholders is essential, as even small changes will have a big impact as we deal with the multiple layers of new decisions as we exit the current emergency into a totally new world of enterprise and business.”

Some respondents expressed frustration about the environment and Melbourne retailers already having access to their share of the water, while irrigators do not. This concern was also raised in one of the virtual town hall events. While the committee is only responsible for making a recommendation on how to distribute the irrigators’ share, we have passed on these views to the Victorian Government.

To make sure that Victoria was compliant with its obligations under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, the environment was issued with its share of Connections Project Stage 1 entitlements in June 2019. The environment received a mix of high-reliability, low-reliability and unregulated entitlements. A review clause was built into the environmental entitlements that means the entitlements that were issued can be adjusted at the end of the project to make sure that the environment’s share is equitable with the entitlements issued to irrigators and the Melbourne retailers.

The Melbourne retailers are yet to be issued with their water entitlements. Like the GMID irrigators, their entitlements will be issued once Connections Project works are complete and the final water recovery has been verified. The Melbourne retailers do receive an allocation each year based on the confirmed volume of water recovered in the previous water year. Water recovered against the irrigators’ share is also confirmed and allocated to a special offset account where it is used to manage the impacts of modernisation works and issuing of Stage 2 entitlements to the Commonwealth. Doing this ensures that existing entitlements remain fully protected while the project is underway.

Feedback outside the ISCC’s scope

Feedback received through surveys, submissions and the virtual town hall events covered many different perspectives and ideas. Some issues raised were outside the scope of what the committee is here to do.

We heard from people that had issues with how the Connections Project has been implemented and from people who thought the costs of delivery shares were too high. Discussions with the community reflected the strong commitment that GMID irrigators have to the long-term viability of irrigation in their area. Many people raised the negative changes to the region that they’d seen following water recovery under the Basin Plan and trade of water out of the region.

We also heard from a number of people who had strong views on what sort of entitlements should make up the irrigators’ share, including people calling for 75GL of HRWS to be distributed to irrigators.

The Victorian Government has released a fact sheet about the types of entitlements that will make up the irrigators’ share, explaining how water savings through irrigation modernisation projects need to be turned into water shares of different types to protect the reliability of all existing water shares. The fact sheet also runs through the history of the Connections Project. [The fact sheet can be found here.](#)

Feedback about the Connections Project has been passed on to the Connections Project Control Group for their consideration.

What's next

Based on the discussions and investigations over the last few months and the valuable input from community members through public consultation, the committee is finalising our recommendation to the Minister for Water.

Our report to the Minister will set out advice and recommendations around other issues for implementation that we heard are important to the community, including the timing of issuing the irrigators' share and the importance of certainty for underpinning people's business decisions.

Once the Minister for Water has approved a distribution model, the Victorian Government will begin implementation works to deliver the irrigators' share to eligible GMID delivery share holders.

We appreciate the time, effort and expertise that has been given by the community to help us determine how this significant regional boost to water security and productivity can be shared by irrigators in the GMID.

The committee looks forward to continuing to work with the Victorian Government and the community to make sure we get the best outcomes from the irrigators' share for the long-term future of irrigation the GMID.

"Delivery share holders pay for the system and therefore the savings. Irrigators use water for productive outcomes (goods), and this chapter needs to be closed fairly-by distributing water savings to Delivery share holders. The delay has been too long already: get it done. We all need to move forward onto other matter and use the water to grow feed for the nation."

"To do anything other than complete the original deal is a key reason for the disregard irrigators have in trusting Government, DELWP and GMW."