



Project Description

Name: GMW Water Efficiency Project
Location: Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, Victoria
Project Type: Off-farm
Proponent: Goulburn Murray Water
Total Project Cost: \$177.5 million
Commonwealth Funding Sought: \$177.5 million
Water Recovery: 15.9 GL
Project Status: Proposal complete – public comment on socio-economic outcomes underway.



Overview

The Goulburn-Murray Water (GMW) Water Efficiency Project presents an opportunity to recover water for the environment through investment in efficiency measures. This proposal comprises two sub-projects, the Backbone Transformation Project (BTP) and Shepparton East Project (SEP). Together, these works will provide 15.9 GL of water savings at a total cost of \$177.5M.

Building on the successful delivery of the Connections Project, the GMW Water Efficiency Project will achieve water savings through additional rationalisation and modernisation opportunities in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID). These works will generate benefits for local and regional communities, reduce ongoing asset financial liability, achieve environmental enhancements and secure water recovery for the environment without buybacks.

The Backbone Transformation Project will treat up to 240 km of channel across five of the six irrigation areas in the GMID and deliver a modernised connection to approximately 545 GMW customers. The Shepparton East Project will deliver a modernised connection to approximately 198 GMW customers by upgrading the non-backbone channels that remain unmodernised.

Socio-Economic Outcomes

The GMW Water Efficiency Project complies with the socio-economic criteria established to ensure efficiency measures have neutral or positive outcomes for communities.

The Water Efficiency Project's water savings are generated by reducing conveyance losses in the GMID channel system. The conveyance losses include evaporation, seepage and leakage in open channels and meter error and leakage in legacy meter outlets. Conveyance losses are provided for in GMW's bulk entitlement. Because the water savings are achieved by securing seepage and evaporation losses the project does not reduce the amount of water available for consumptive use or increase water prices.

Modernising irrigation channels in the GMID will improve service delivery standards to irrigators and contribute to the overall viability of the GMID by reducing the irrigation infrastructure footprint and bringing down the whole-of-life operation and maintenance costs for GMW customers.

The project will support local industry and regional economies by creating employment opportunities through project construction and procurement of supply services. More broadly, the improved security and level of supply delivered to irrigation businesses is expected to provide long-term drought and climate resilience and productivity improvements, generating flow-on benefits to the regional economy, including local employment opportunities.

GMW customers and landowners have been engaged in the process of modernising the GMID since GMW began investigating options in the early 2000s. Stakeholders and the local community including traditional owners will continue to be engaged during design and project delivery.

The Water Efficiency Project works align with priority one of the Regional Catchment Strategy, which is to update irrigation infrastructure, including the irrigation delivery system and farm design. All works will be undertaken in accordance with the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) prepared by the GMW Connections Project. The EMP plan sets out the processes, procedures and guidelines to ensure that construction activities are delivered in compliance with relevant state and Commonwealth legislation, including the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* and the *Victorian Environmental Effects Act*.

Under the Connections Project governance framework, formal meetings with Yorta Yorta Nation representatives are held every three months to ensure cultural values are identified, protected and improved. A cultural heritage investigation will be undertaken in consultation with Yorta Yorta Nation representatives during business case development. Consistent with the objectives of *Water for Victoria*, this investigation will consider opportunities for the project to enhance recognition of aboriginal values and traditional ecological knowledge in water planning and build capacity for Aboriginal involvement in water management.