

## MILLIONS TO FLOOD MURRUMBIDGEE AFTER ACCORD

24 April 2009

Water efficiency projects worth many millions of dollars are proposed for the Murrumbidgee Valley, having received broad endorsement by the region's Customer Service Committee (CSC) during talks last week.

Committee members representing irrigators and stakeholder groups met with representatives from Water for Rivers and State Water Corporation to identify projects that will improve water and operating efficiency along the Murrumbidgee.

In all 16 projects ranging from technology upgrades to rehabilitating waterways have been identified for feasibility planning after two days of analyzing proposals in Leeton on 15-16 April.

The projects all seek to utilise water resources as efficiently as possible, with some savings being used to return flows to the Snowy River under the tri-government Water for Rivers project, in return for up to \$50million in funding support.

Murrumbidgee CSC Chair, Rel Heckendorf said the committee sought assurances that some water savings could be retained in the region and had used a broad criteria to evaluate proposals.

"I commend the committee for the way they worked together to identify projects with benefits to the local irrigation industry and the businesses and communities that rely on it for their livelihoods," Mr Heckendorf said.

"The committee members acknowledged the need for greater efficiency and made the most of what is a unique opportunity to utilise government assistance to ensure the local industry's viability well into the future."

State Water's Manager Water Delivery Dan Berry, said the scope of the projects offers huge benefits to industry and the environment while establishing Murrumbidgee river operators and irrigators as industry leaders in NSW and the Murray Darling Basin.

"There was broad agreement that at least some of these projects were either overdue or inevitable, so the opportunity to undertake improvements on this scale will bring major improvements across the board within a much shorter timeframe," Mr Berry said.

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"From a broader perspective it is encouraging that the committee from the state's most valuable and diverse irrigation region has embraced the need for water reform and set the benchmark for other regions of the state."

Water for Rivers Project Director, Kaye Dalton, said the proposals endorsed by the committee are broadly aligned with Water for Rivers project goals.

"Although most of the projects nominated are in the pre-planning stage, they all meet the guidelines set by Water for Rivers in that they are sustainable and involve potential water savings and efficiencies," Ms Dalton said.

"Whilst Water for Rivers' aim is to restore flows to one of the nation's most iconic waterways, investment in water efficiency projects in the Murrumbidgee will provide benefits to the local environment and enhance the viability of the irrigation businesses and industries," she said.

"In an atmosphere of intense scrutiny on water management in the Murray Darling Basin it is a credit to the Murrumbidgee committee that members were able to demonstrate their willingness to be progressive and act in the long term interests of their industry and their local communities."

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