

SHARING TASMANIA'S IRRIGATION STORIES

Message from the CEO

By Andrew Kneebone

There has never been a more crucial time for Tamar Valley farmers.

A \$165 million infrastructure investment into the region is on the line.

The redesigned Tamar Irrigation Scheme has the capacity to deliver 13,500 megalitres of high-surety irrigation water to landowners in the Beaconsfield, Legana, Rowella, Hillwood, Pipers Brook and Pipers River areas.

However, if sufficient water entitlement applications are not received by 29 February, then the project is at risk of not proceeding.

Tasmanian Irrigation encourages all farmers considering purchasing water to finalise their applications as soon as possible. The price per megalitre will increase after this water sales process concludes, so this is the cheapest Tamar water will ever be.

If you are unsure about how this water will benefit your business, please take time to speak to other irrigators around the State, your accountant, bank manager, financial planner, agronomist and family members.

As Whitmore irrigator Rob Dent recently said:

"It was a big gamble for us to spend half a million dollars on water back in 2010 as we hadn't done much irrigating. But there hasn't been a single day that we regret our decision to purchase water from Tasmanian Irrigation. My advice to any famer considering buying water entitlements is get more than you need today."

February 2024

This season is a perfect example of the value of irrigation water.

Tasmanian Irrigation delivered an additional 28,000 ML to 31 December, a 229 per cent increase on the previous year. This is due to the dry conditions at the start of the season.

Without this water, there is no doubt that crops would have failed, yields would have been slashed and livestock condition would have been impacted.

The Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme continues to move forward, with the public comment period for the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* referral closing at 5pm on Monday (19 February).

And water sales are expected to re-open for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme in coming months.

Tasmanian Irrigation looks forward to continuing to work closely with its customers and the Tasmanian agricultural sector to further grow the value of our rural industries.

Cheers,

Andrew



Meet the Irrigator

goFARM



*Joe Barlow from
goFARM on their
Tamar vineyard*

Twelve months ago, goFARM employed one person in Tasmania.

More than 100 people will be working across their three properties by spring.

goFARM was founded in 2013 and has been responsible for the ownership and management of more than 80,000 hectares of prime agricultural land and associated water entitlements across Australia, \$600 million in equity capital deployed and \$1 billion in total assets.

The properties include Petro Station in the Mallee region (NSW), Sandmount Farms in Katunga (Victoria) and the 5,000-hectare Canally Almond Orchards in the Sunraysia district (NSW).

And now, the Australian-owned company's land development program is firmly focused on Tasmania.

They have purchased a 200-hectare property near Relbia, 494 hectares at Kayena in the Tamar Valley and a further 225 hectares on Greens Beach Road.

Twenty hectares of wine grapes have already been planted, a further 120 hectares will be established within 12 months and then a further 100 hectares will be developed.

goFARM's Tasmanian General Manager, Allan Barr, said one of the critical ingredients underpinning investment decisions is water.

"goFARM employed one person – me – in Tasmania a year ago. Six months ago there were two of us. Now there are four. I am looking to employ seven full-time staff over the next three months.

"We have six different local contractors working on our properties, each with one to four staff.

"This year we will employ 60 seasonal workers for six months of the year and our numbers will double every year for the next three years.

"And we are spending millions of dollars on irrigation development, pipe work, installation – all with Tasmanian businesses.

"If we didn't have our water assets and the ability to access high-surety water, we wouldn't be doing any of this."

goFARM has been acquiring and managing water since the company's inception, taking great pride in developing expertise in its usage, value and the optionality it delivers to agriculture.

Meet the Irrigator continued...

Investing in people, technology, productivity and sustainability to transform underutilised or undercapitalised assets to develop investment-grade agricultural assets to address global demand for healthy, nutritious food is the company's driving strategy.

goFARM has paid a deposit to purchase 850 megalitres from the Tamar Irrigation Scheme, which is currently open for water sales until 29 February.

This investment has occurred despite already having a 1,460 ML dam and a 1,600 ML water right from Middle Arm Creek on the Kayena property, where 180 hectares of grapes will be planted. Varieties include Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Riesling and Syrah.

"We believe that water is a foundation stone in agriculture development," Allan said.

"goFARM through its entire portfolio is hinged heavily off water security. It's a critical part of our decision making when purchasing land so we can transform the land to higher and better use to return value to our investors and to the business.

"We firmly believe that water will not lose value.

"We will be very disappointed if the Tamar Irrigation Scheme is lost not only to us, but the whole region, due to a lack of interest.

"I would encourage people to think very deeply about how they can add value to their core asset – their land – whether today, tomorrow or in five or 10 years."

"People must realise that these opportunities only come along once in a farming generation so if they miss out, it's unlikely they will have another chance to invest in high-surety water in their lifetime.

"I encourage small, medium and large land owners to get quality advice from agricultural experts to make sure they understand what value they can add to their land holding by purchasing water entitlements from the Tamar Irrigation Scheme."



Operations

By David Skipper, Chief Operating Officer



to
a

Tasmanian Irrigation's Water Delivery Team is responsible for the operation of 19 irrigation schemes around Tasmania, and the delivery of irrigation water in an efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable manner to more than 1,000 irrigators.

Tasmanian Irrigation employs skilled and dedicated Scheme Operators to manage and administer the schemes.

The team also manages a range of inherited infrastructure, including Lake Leake, Rileys Creek Dam, Togari Water Scheme and the Montagu and Welcome River Improvement Schemes.

Regular routine maintenance, compliance and ensuring the schemes are delivering water at the most efficient curve is paramount to a successful scheme and ensuring water costs to irrigators are controlled and appropriate.

For more information about Water Delivery, please contact Tasmanian Irrigation on (03) 6398-8433 or watertrading@tasmanianirrigation.com.au

The 2023/24 season is distinctly different to the prior three seasons.

What we have experienced to date has been a quick and solid requirement for early season water.

Irrigators were supplied with 40,355 megalitres to the end of December 2023, compared to 12,244 ML to 31 December 2022. This is a 28,000 ML increase or a 229 per cent jump.

The comparison of the current season to the end of December with December 2021 shows an increase of 146 per cent (23,963 ML).

The volume already delivered in December 2023 is the equivalent of delivering this volume by end February / March of the previous two years.

The December 2020 volume was the highest on record at that time. As the graph below demonstrates, 2023 certainly eclipses 2020 by a substantial margin.

The 2023 winter turned from a wet and mild period in the north

dry, windy, and challenging period for all crops and pastures.

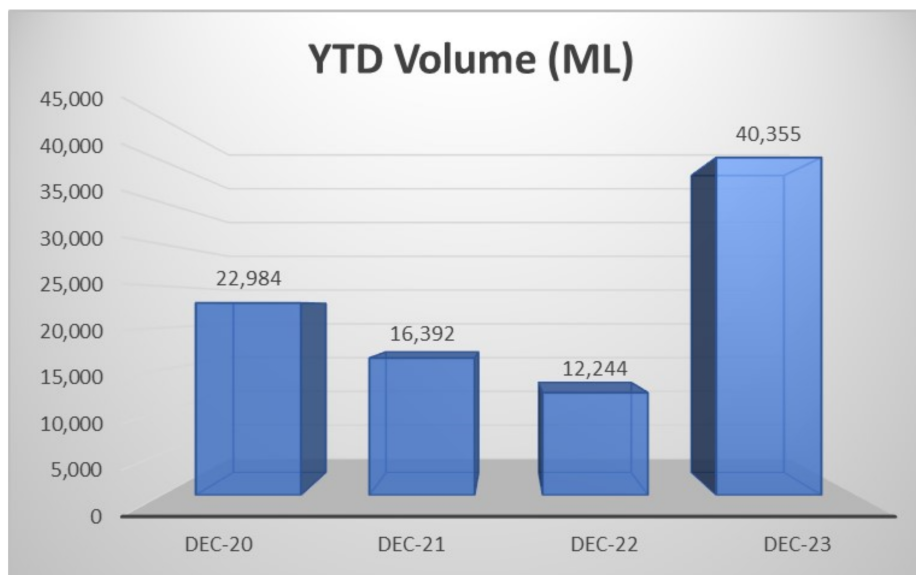
The southern region of Tasmania experienced extremely dry conditions throughout the 2023 autumn and winter.

Many irrigators in the spring of 2023 had great concerns about the summer period and the well-publicised El Nino forecasting hot temperatures and zero to very little rain.

Farmers bracing for an impending drought were further impacted by the continuing price decline in many commodities and rising input costs.

The combination of these influences solidified the decision to open the irrigation season early for some schemes.

In one case, the Southern Highlands Irrigation Scheme opened its season very early and with the dam storage at only 60 per cent of capacity.



This had a profound effect on the season allocation to irrigators, although it allowed them to start irrigating early and provide necessary moisture for crop growth and livestock finishing.

The dry start to the irrigation season may have an impact on some of the schemes at the back end of this 2023/24 season, depending upon the prevailing weather conditions.

The current predictions indicate the next three months from February 2024 are expected to be below average rainfall and above average daily temperatures.

Schemes may seek an extension to the season allowing the full utilisation of their entitlements, or close the season, and apply for *General Availability* water.

The impact will most likely be felt next season, if the winter and spring period is dry and rainfall below average as this will affect Tasmanian Irrigation's ability to harvest in the off season to fill dams for the 2024/25 season.

All Tasmanian Irrigation dams (except Southernfield) are in good positions at this time of the season, and we do not expect any unforeseen supply issues to complete the 2023/24 irrigation season.

The unexpected rain events in late December 2023 and early January 2024 provided the opportunity for Tasmanian Irrigation to secure some water and harvest into dams.

As at mid-January 2024, all Tasmanian Irrigation dams, except Southernfield, were greater than 55 per cent full and all north eastern dams exceeded 80 per cent capacity.

The January period represents 50 per cent of the irrigation season completed, and in prior years, a large majority of irrigation supply for the season is achieved by 31 January.

Irrigator Representative Committee Meetings

From January to December 2023, Tasmanian Irrigation held and attended 40 Irrigator Representative Committee meetings.

Of these 40, 19 of these meetings were face to face discussions to determine the new season pricing, including fixed charges and asset renewals.

Largely, the meetings were well attended by the representatives from each of their schemes and discussion, although robust at times, was generally positive, harmonious and respectful.

The 2024 IRC meetings will be scheduled from May this year.

Dam safety

Tasmanian Irrigation's annual dam safety report has recently been completed and submitted to the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE).

The Annual Dam Safety Report demonstrates Tasmanian Irrigation's compliance with the dam safety standards set out in the *Water Management (Safety of Dams) Regulations 2015*.

Every year Tasmanian Irrigation must lodge a separate report for each of our dams with NRE.

There are no intolerable dam safety risks within the Tasmanian Irrigation portfolio.

The main purpose of Tasmanian Irrigation and our irrigation schemes is to overcome periods without rain or sporadic periods of very low rainfall during the growing season to prevent entire crop and pasture losses.

This was particularly evident with the late winter and summer period of 2023.

Significant yield losses in most crops in a Tasmanian context, can be effectively prevented through irrigation intervention.

Irrigation water is utilised to buffer the harmful effects of rainfall deficits. It is not 100 per cent mitigation to drought and cannot sustain whole farms.

However, it does allow crops and pastures to survive and sustain yields until natural rain occurs.

When water is limited, growers may need to change from their normal irrigation practice to optimise yield, quality and water use efficiency.

As with fully irrigated production in Tasmania, the aim is to limit or minimise the amount of stress on the crop.

Irrigators have the advantage of being able to apply water to aid germination, emergence, and incorporate herbicides and nutrients.

If rainfall is short, irrigation can prevent an early season drought.

If you wish to check if any water entitlements are available to purchase in your area, please email

watertrading@tasmanianirrigation.com.au

Program Development and Delivery

By Jacob Gerke



Tasmanian Irrigation's Program Development and Delivery Team is proud to deliver irrigation projects from concept to water delivery, ensuring schemes are designed to be in operation for the next generation of farmers and beyond.

There are a number of important steps incorporated into developing a new irrigation scheme, including:

- Community consultation;
- Expressions of interest;
- Launch of preferred option design;
- Water sales;
- Contracts with landowners;
- Business case;
- Detailed design;
- Permits and approvals;
- Construction; and
- Commissioning.

Along the way, risks are continually evaluated as the design progresses in terms of environment, social acceptability, cost and economic outcomes.

As these schemes rely on a unique public / private partnership and funding model, all stakeholders are engaged and consulted to ensure key needs are met.

All Tasmanian Irrigation schemes are designed to last at least 100 years and deliver water at an annual average reliability of more than 95 per cent.

The Program Development and Delivery team is delighted to share an update on current projects:

Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme

Capacity: 25,500 megalitres
Area serviced: Macquarie, Barton, Conara, Campbell Town, Ross and the Lower Isis Valley

Tasmanian Irrigation has selected the preferred tenderer for the construction of the Poatina buffer dam. A contractor / design partner early contractor involvement process will be utilised to complete the dam design prior to construction commencement.

The public comment period for the Preliminary Documentation under the Federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) process will conclude on 19 February, with a decision due in the coming months.

The pipeline, pump stations and balance tank construction contractor has commenced early planning works, including the balance tank design.

Approximately 20km of HDPE pipe has been manufactured.

Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

Augmentation: 9,200 ML
Total scheme capacity: 14,860 ML
Area serviced: Sassafras, Harford, Thirlstane, Moriarty, Wesley Vale, Northdown, Pardoe and East Devonport

Detailed design is now approaching finalisation.

Permits and approvals are in progress with the EPBC assessment pathway confirmed to be via Controlled Action via Preliminary Documentation.

Landowner Access Agreements are being developed with all landowners.

Final pipeline alignment surveys and environmental walk-throughs have been completed.



Environmental surveys being conducted on the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

Tamar Irrigation Scheme

Capacity: 13,500 ML

Area serviced: Beaconsfield, Legana, Rowella, Hillwood, Pipers Brook and Pipers River

The redesigned project has a 13,500 megalitre capacity and includes 130km of pipeline to cover the east and west sides of the Tamar River and through to Pipers Brook.

Water Sales are currently in progress and will close on 29 February.

The first Drop in Days at Pipers Brook and Rowella were well attended, including by IRC members.

The next Drop in Days are scheduled for Tuesday 20 February:

- 9.30am — 11.30am: Pipers Brook Fire Station, 14 Hall Road, Pipers Brook; and
- 1pm — 3.30pm: Rowella Hall, 422 Rowella Road, Rowella

Greater South East Irrigation Scheme

Capacity: 18,600 ML

Area serviced: Jordan River Valley, Brighton, Richmond, Dulcot, Cambridge, Colebrook, Campania, Tea Tree, Orierton, Pawleena, Penna, Sorell and Forcett areas.

The business case for the proposed \$301 million scheme has been lodged with both the State and Federal Governments for approval and funding.

The proposed scheme sources water directly from Lake Meadowbank, which is then pumped over Pelham Tier and down through the Jordan River Valley and across to the South East, amalgamating the existing Stage Two and Three schemes.

Tasmanian Irrigation will announce soon the timing for a second round of water sales for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme.

Water sales will offer the spare capacity of the proposed scheme, including around 5,000 ML of summer capacity, across the Jordan Valley and South East regions.

Works have commenced on in-field environmental assessments, hydrology studies and engineering alignment walkthroughs to progress the critical path timeframe for the scheme prior to funding approval.

Greater Meander Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

Augmentation: 11,000 ML

Total scheme capacity: 39,800 ML

Area serviced: Meander, Rubicon, Hagley, Caveside and Quamby

20km of pipeline upgrades are now 95 per cent complete, with commissioning and rehabilitation underway.

Pipeline works remaining are primarily post irrigation season tie in, and 11 property outlets.

The tender has been issued for Caveside and Quamby pump station upgrades, along with ordering of long lead time items.

The contract has been issued for the installation of three flow monitoring weirs across the scheme.

New water has been delivered during the summer 2023-24 irrigation season within the Meander River.

Lake Leake Dam Works

Our construction contractor is completing concrete overlay waterproofing of the upstream face of the dam spillway.

Instrumentation and power are now installed, and construction works are on track to be completed in February.



Meet the Irrigator

Andrew Jones



Andrew and Karen Jones with their children Oli, Harry and Meg

Water, water and more water – this is the underlying key to success, expansion and diversification for Andrew and Karen Jones.

When you are looking to slow down and escape from the corporate world, intensive farming is not always the first choice.

But for Andrew, who successfully established and grew Andrew Jones Travel in Hobart and Launceston, turning 50 prompted a monumental shift from the office to the paddock.

With a seven-generation farming history in the Jordan Valley, the family's agricultural legacy was at risk of ending with Andrew's parents Sue and Phil ready to retire.

So Andrew, his wife Karen and three children purchased Invercarron from his parents to continue the sheep and cropping enterprises.

"Our family had farmed the Jordan River region since 1818," Andrew said. "I spent all my time growing up at the Broadmarsh Cricket and the Elderslie Golf Club, and didn't really help Dad at all.

"I certainly wasn't a farmer."

In fact, on the Invercarron website, Andrew admits he didn't know the difference between a wether and a ewe.

But he returned home with passion, vision, determination and strong business knowledge, quickly realising that running sheep on 1300 acres "wasn't really viable".

The Jones family purchased a north-facing neighbouring farm and engaged a viticulturist. In 2017 they planted their first Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinot Gris grapes.

They encountered numerous obstacles with dolerite rock, drainage, north west winds and frosts. However, their first vintage – a 2019 Pinot Noir – won a medal and they haven't looked back.

Andrew is very quick to reiterate that access to irrigation water has underpinned the required confidence to diversify and expand.

And now, with the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme progressing toward securing funding and construction, the Jones family is busy planning the next steps.

Meet the Irrigator continued...

They currently have water entitlements of approximately 75 megalitres and have been unable to secure any additional water. Juggling water between prime lamb and grape production is an ongoing challenge.

They have contractually applied for 250 megalitres at Broadmarsh and 300 megalitres at Dysart as part of the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme.

Once the water flows, they hope to increase the area planted to vines from the current 12 hectares to 20 hectares. They have recently planted Shiraz grapes to add to their table wine mix, and are looking at additional wine grape opportunities. They will also double their sheep operation from 2,000 to 4,000 Merino ewes.

There are also plans to expand the on-farm tourism component. Their luxury accommodation offering – Picker’s Hut – has proven to be a successful addition to their business, and a cellardoor facility could be on the cards.

“Currently we are the only vineyard in the Jordan Valley, but once we have additional water surety through the Greater South East Scheme, then I’m sure more grapes will be planted and the region could achieve scale to become a tourism destination.

“There’s no reason why the Jordan Valley couldn’t be a mini Coal River Valley in 20 years with

numerous vineyards and significant employment opportunities.

“This all comes down to water.

“You have to have guaranteed supply to have the confidence to invest and look at vineyards, cherries and other high-yielding crops.

“The reality is that water will never get cheaper. You have to have a look at the returns on sheep and livestock at the moment, which are heading south.

“The return on vines is only going to get higher as demand for premium cool climate Tasmanian grapes continues to grow.

“You can’t rely on rainfall for a vineyard, so this scheme is going to be a real game changer for our region and the entire south east.”

Andrew said another benefit of Tasmanian Irrigation water was the creation of jobs and new industries for future generations.

“My three children don’t have interest in our farm at the moment, but having reliable and quality irrigation water might help them to come back as it eliminates a lot of stress out of farming.

“It’s always in the back of our minds that we could have back-to-back dry years, which would create quite a few issues, but the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme will take away this uncertainty and risk.”



Solar update

How much are farmers saving from solar arrays?

Five solar arrays have now been installed on Tasmanian Irrigation pump stations and are generating electricity.

The Energy on Farms Solar Project was designed to deliver direct savings to farmers by offsetting electricity usage at Tasmanian Irrigation pump stations and generating surplus power to be fed back into the grid.

The level of savings per scheme depends on the quantity of water delivered and the efficiency of each pump.

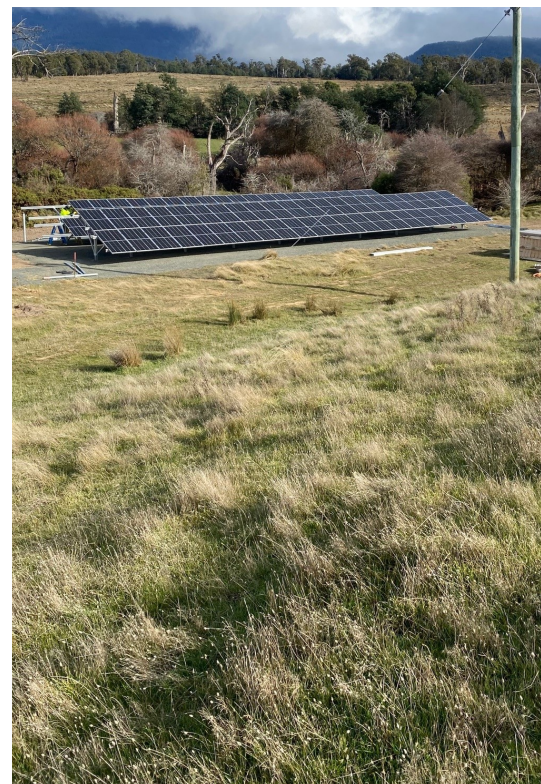
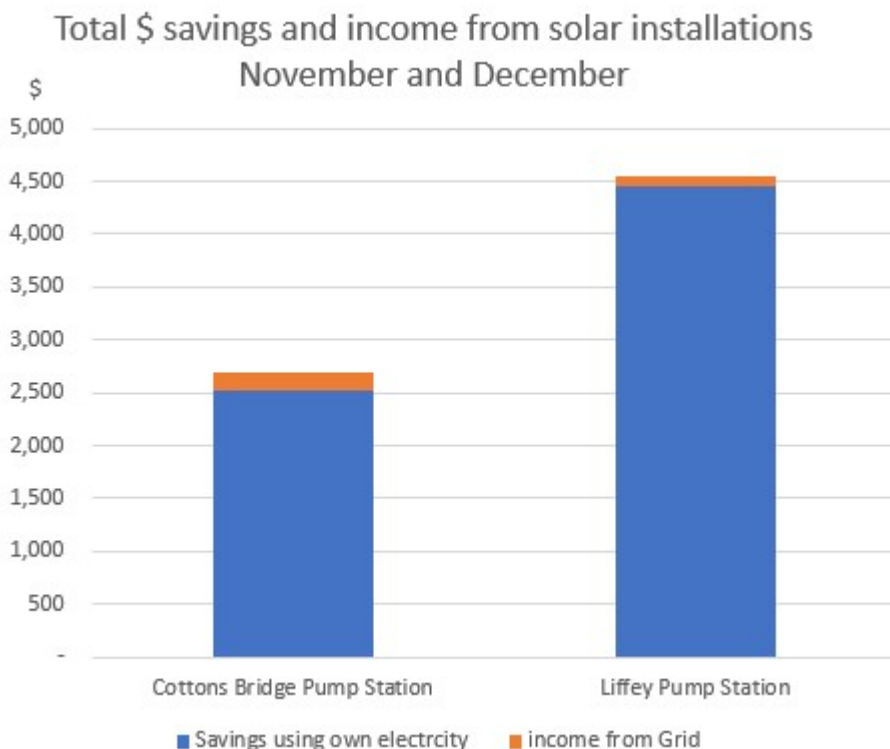
While 12 months of data is required to give an accurate picture, it is encouraging that savings are already being realised on several of the pump stations after two months of operation.

Savings are on average \$4.30 per megalitre for water delivered in November and December on the Cottons Bridge pump station on the Upper Ringarooma Irrigation Scheme and on the Whitemore Irrigation Scheme's Liffey pump station.

Irrigators in these schemes will receive the financial benefit later in 2024 when the lower electricity cost is passed through to irrigators, and the water price is recalculated taking into account the savings from solar.

The graph below shows the power costs avoided by using our own generated solar, as well as income from electricity being fed into the grid. Tasmanian Irrigation will provide further updates on the success of this project as additional data becomes available.

"Tasmanian Irrigation is committed to delivering irrigation water as cost effectively and efficiently as possible to ensure Tasmanian farmers are able to access irrigation water where and when they need it."



Liffey Pump Station solar arrays

A Weed Identification Solution

By Amy Madsen, TI Environmental Officer — Compliance



A new tool to assist in identifying weeds will help Tasmanian farmers to manage weed infestations.

After years of development and testing, WeedScan, the cutting-edge AI-powered weed identification app, is now officially available to the public, emerging as a game-changer for enhancing sustainable land management.

The app has been developed by the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions, a not-for-profit member-based organisation focused on addressing the impact of invasive plants and animals across Australia.

Using WeedScan is as easy as taking a photo of a suspected weed and uploading it to the app.

Leveraging its extensive database of over 120,000 verified weed images, the app automatically suggests a possible plant identification(s) and notifies local weed control authorities about priority weed sightings, fostering collaborative action.

Weeds have presented persistent difficulties for Australian producers, with an annual cost estimated at \$4.9 billion.

They have detrimental impacts on the environment, diminishing habitats for native species, degrading the environment, clogging waterways, exacerbating water quality issues, and heightening the risk of bushfires.

Are you ready to take control of weed management, protect the environment, and enhance our landscapes?

You can download WeedScan from the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android) or access it via the website at <https://weedscan.org.au/>.

"WeedScan is a new weed identification app that uses AI to help identify weeds for better land management."





TASMANIAN IRRIGATION — MEET THE TEAM

Samantha Meyer

Tasmanian Irrigation title: Manager Stakeholder Relations and Communications.

Brief summary of work history: I grew up in Tasmania and have lived and worked in Perth and Canberra. My career started with the ABC and I worked in news, current affairs and program making. I've managed corporate affairs for organisations in the government, private and not-for-profit sectors at state and national level. I've been really privileged through my work to see and do a lot of things many people never get to – from meeting heads of state and pop stars, to standing on top of a hydropower dam during a construction project, to getting involved with some community organisations I am passionate about.

Brief description of your current role: I joined Tasmanian Irrigation in late 2023 and will be overseeing Tasmanian Irrigation's Stakeholder Engagement and Communication activity.

What do you enjoy most about working at Tasmanian Irrigation: Working with people who are passionate about supporting a sustainable and flourishing agricultural sector in Tasmania, and meeting the people who run the farming businesses we all rely on.

What has been your most memorable moment since joining Tasmanian Irrigation: Standing on a ridge in Forth overlooking thriving farms supported by the Don Irrigation Scheme, and talking to some of those farmers about the difference high-reliability irrigation water has made to them.

Where is the best place you have travelled to? It's a real toss up. I loved everything about everywhere I travelled in Turkey – the landscapes, the food, the people. But I also love rural Italy and New York City, and I have a soft spot for Oslo and parts of Thailand. And there are so many places still on my list...

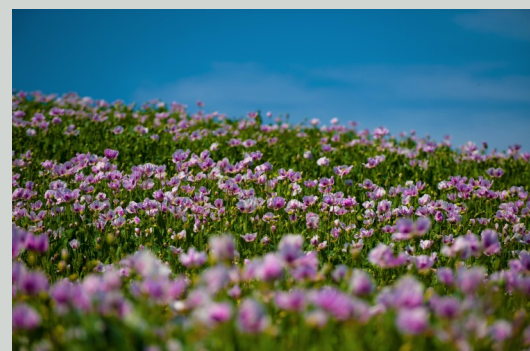
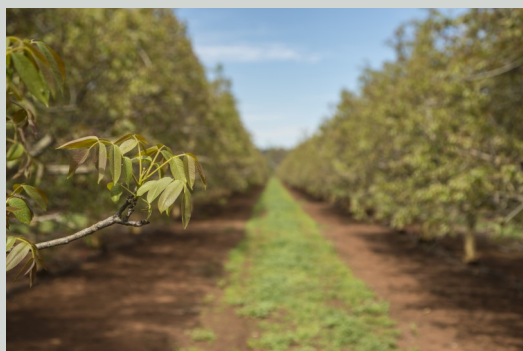
What is one thing you would do to make the world a better place? Be more curious about and kinder to people on the margins. We're all just one bad day or decision or event away from being in those shoes.

An interesting fact about you is: My two passions, which are also sanity savers, are singing in a band and cold water swimming.

What's the best concert you've been to? I saw Prince in Melbourne with my sister not long before he died. I'd been a fan since I was a teenager and he remained an amazing performer right up to the end. He still had all the moves! Sadly, he died on my birthday so I will always have a twinge of sadness on my birthday for the loss of his musical genius.

What show are you currently binge watching? I just finished watching Ted Lasso. For the second time around. And I can see myself watching all three seasons a third time!

Upcoming Events



Please visit Tasmanian Irrigation's website at www.tasmanianirrigation.com.au to ensure you stay up to date with the latest information about existing operational irrigation schemes and Tranche Three projects. And don't forget to follow Tasmanian Irrigation on Facebook.

Forecast upcoming events include:

20 February

Tamar Irrigation Scheme Drop in Day

9.30am — 11.30am: Pipers Brook Fire Station, 14 Hall Road, Pipers Brook

1pm — 3.30pm: Rowella Hall, 422 Rowella Road, Rowella

29 February

Tamar water sales close

Early 2024

Greater South East water sales re-open

Northern Midlands construction commences



Tasmanian Irrigation

For more information about this newsletter, please contact:

Tasmanian Irrigation Pty Ltd

Address: Level 2, Launceston Airport Passenger Terminal Building,
201 Evandale Rd, Western Junction, TASMANIA, 7212

Postal address: PO Box 84, Evandale, TAS, 7212

Phone: (03) 6398-8433

Web: www.tasirrigation.com.au

If you would like to unsubscribe or subscribe additional email addresses, please contact communications@tasirrigation.com.au

This newsletter contains information of a general nature and reasonable care has been taken to ensure accuracy of content at the time of publication. Scheme details and policies may change, and individual circumstances may vary. This newsletter should not be relied upon as a basis of individual decision making.