

Branch Out

Tasmanian
Irrigation

SHARING TASMANIA'S IRRIGATION STORIES

Message from the CEO

By Andrew Kneebone

Tasmanian Irrigation is extremely disappointed that funding was not secured in the 2024 Federal Budget for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme.

\$150 million had been sought as the Australian Government's contribution to the project. The message from the Australian Government is that the door is open to resubmit the project for consideration in future Budgets. It is our intention to resubmit the business case, following receipt of detailed feedback from the Australian Government.

We continue to work with the Tasmanian Government regarding options to progress the GSEIS over the short term until full funding is achieved. And we acknowledge, and are thankful for, the Government's ongoing commitment to fund its share of the project.

The importance of the Greater South East scheme was demonstrated by the turnout of more than 100 people at the Sorell Memorial Hall last week to discuss the next steps to ensure this vital irrigation project can proceed. We understand the frustration of irrigators and will continue to work as hard as possible to secure funds.

It's pleasing to have had opportunities to brief new Primary Industries and Water Minister, the Hon. Jane Howlett, on key issues for farmers and our business. We look forward to working closely with the Minister and the State Treasurer on the next steps for the GSEIS and for the Tamar Irrigation Scheme (read more below). We also thank the Hon. Jo Palmer for her tireless work during her time as Minister, and wish her all the best with her new portfolios.

Tasmanian Irrigation recently began a consultation process with irrigators regarding the Tasmanian Government's policy to enable community

management of publicly owned irrigation schemes, where feasible and appropriate.

During May, we held six sessions at locations across the State, and one online session, where we explained the intent of changes to Tasmanian law that enable community management, described how we think implementation would work, and shared draft Guidelines and an application form for feedback.

We thank everyone who attended these sessions and remind you that feedback closes on 21 June. A second round of consultation on the final draft documents will open later in the year. More information about community management can be found at www.tasmanianirrigation.com.au/community-management-of-schemes

Our thoughts remain with all farmers regarding the current extended dry period. I sincerely thank all our Scheme Operators and the entire TI team for delivering a record quantity of water across the 2023/24 season.

We know how much pressure dry conditions put on farmers and we were pleased to be able to respond by extending the summer irrigation season for 12 schemes to enable farmers to finish crops and prepare for the upcoming season. We are now hoping for winter rain to provide much-needed soil moisture and replenish our dams. Our Scheme Operators are working hard to undertake off-season maintenance and pump water into dams around the State.

Please enjoy this edition of Branch Out.

Andrew

June 2024



Latest News

From the Paddocks

Are you the next Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year?

Tasmanians aged 15 to 30 are invited to enter the Woolworths Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year competition.

This annual award, proudly presented by Rural Youth Tasmania, was launched at Agfest and more than \$40,000 in prizes are on offer.

The competition is held over two stages. The first stage, the run offs, will be held at Quercus Park on 15 July and entrants will compete in a range of activities, many based around tasks or jobs regularly completed on a farm.

The 10 highest point scorers in the run offs qualify for the final.

The second stage, the State final, will run on 12 August at Quercus Park. The finalists compete in 10 modules throughout the day. The top four competitors participate in the final two modules—quiz and public speaking.

The Woolworths Tasmanian Young Farmer of the Year will be announced at the Tasmanian Young Farmer Dinner held that night.

For more information and to enter, please visit www.ruralityouth.com.au/youngfarmer



Erosion and sediment control

Tasmanian Irrigation staff and contractors recently participated in Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) training, focusing on minimising environmental impacts during project construction.

An insight into the outcomes of poor ESC practices, including reduced photosynthesis, habitat destruction, algal blooms and pollution / toxicity, were highlighted to the TI team members and contractors that attended.

“With newfound knowledge and skills, we are better equipped to safeguard our environment while executing construction projects responsibly,” said TI Environmental Officer — Compliance, Amy Madsen.



The 2023 Young Farmer of the Year was Moriarty farmer Owen Woolley (centre), pictured with Wesley Polden from Woolworths (left) and Rural Youth State President Brady Robins (right)

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Message from the Minister

The Hon. Jane Howlett, Primary Industries and Water Minister

I know that irrigation is a game changer for our farming community.

I've seen with my own eyes how naturally drier areas, such as the Coal Valley where I grew up, have been transformed into incredibly productive and innovative agricultural regions through access to reliable irrigation water.

I also know how critical our irrigation schemes are to build resilience to dry conditions, which much of Tasmania is currently experiencing.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to improving irrigation infrastructure around the State so our farmers can continue growing produce that is the envy of the world.

As the new Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I'm working every day to champion our farmers, who are the economic backbone of Tasmania.

That is also why I was so disappointed that there was no funding commitment in the recent Federal Budget for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme.

I know our irrigator community is disappointed too.

I am also aware this may have a significant impact on farmers who now face an imminent rise in the cost of water and uncertainty of supply.

The \$75 million committed by the Tasmanian Government to the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme, through its 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, is secure.

The Greater South East Irrigation Scheme will deliver up to 37,200 megalitres of reliable irrigation water each year to more than 300 irrigators in the south east, including Gretna, Jordan River Valley, Brighton, Cambridge, Richmond, Tea Tree, Colebrook, Campania, Orielton, Sorell and Forcett.

The upgrades will improve reliability of the scheme and provide additional irrigation water to both existing and new irrigators.

The Scheme is estimated to trigger an additional \$120 million of on-farm investment and create a \$98.7 million annual boost in the State's farmgate value.

"Rest assured, I will continue to fight for more agricultural water for our farmers in the south east."

The 2030 Strong Plan highlights the Tasmanian Government's strong investment record with irrigation projects.

I know that Tasmanian Irrigation is also continuing to work with both the Tasmanian and Australian Governments, TasWater and the south east irrigator community to make sure this scheme goes ahead.

The Tasmanian Government will continue to work with the Australian Government to also progress the Northern Midlands, Sassafras Wesley Vale Augmentation and Tamar irrigation projects in collaboration with Tasmanian Irrigation.

Already, Tasmania's Rural Water Use Strategy is guiding work to ensure we have a modern water management framework where our water assets and services deliver on community, environmental and industry needs and are sustainable in the face of a changing climate.



What is the role of a TI Asset Engineer?

Anne-Marie du Plessis, Manager of Operations and Assets

Tasmanian Irrigation currently employs one Asset Engineer, responsible for managing almost 30,000 assets — from pipes and pumps to dams and drainage systems.

Considerable work continues to be undertaken by our asset engineer to determine the asset replacement value and accurately record the current condition of each asset.

This information goes from Tasmanian Irrigation's maintenance management system into an asset lifecycle modelling tool that helps predict when assets will fail and what it will cost to repair or replace.

This enables Tasmanian Irrigation to do Asset Renewal Levy (ARL) budgeting for the next 50 years, with the knowledge that our assets must last the life of a scheme (100 years). The information is forwarded to Tasmanian Irrigation's commercial team to manage each scheme's unique ARL budget looking forward 10 to 100 years and determine the water pricing for the next year.

The accuracy of this data for each asset determines the accuracy of budgets, water pricing and reflects on how well Tasmanian Irrigation is managing the operational schemes.

As you can imagine, it is an annual moving target with changes happening to pricing and asset condition all the time for all 28,400 assets and requires updating and fine tuning.

This is also further compounded by the addition of new schemes being commissioned.

Because the condition of the assets is a vital part of this process, it is important that we accurately capture asset condition and when it changes.

If, for example, we replace a mechanical seal in a pump, we need to update the condition data in our system for that pump's seal. Then we will know that in five to six years' time, we need to budget for another new seal.

A key component of the Asset Engineer's role is looking at our assets from an asset management point by administrating, updating and renewing existing processes and helping to facilitate the design and implementation of a maintenance management process that fits our unique way of operating and maintaining the schemes.

Managing spare parts is also key, helping to develop a process that is workable, efficient and cost effective for the schemes.

The Asset Engineer needs a good understanding of assets, their history and current condition with any works recently done / due.

They will also focus on scheme challenges and provide assistance with any breakdowns, ensuring learnings from one scheme can be shared across other schemes.

The Asset Engineer works closely with myself as the Manager of Operations and Assets, Tasmanian Irrigation's electricians, engineering team and our Scheme Operators and Water Delivery team to sort out asset challenges as much as possible. It's a very rewarding, challenging and exciting role at Tasmanian Irrigation that delivers direct benefits to our irrigators and business.



Delivering More Water, While Reducing Debt

Cody Townend, Project Finance and Management Accountant

Tasmanian Irrigation has begun work on a project aiming to maximise the amount of water available to irrigators on our schemes and reduce the level of debt associated with unsold water.

Unsold water entitlements remain available on some schemes where irrigators have not taken up the full capacity.

From a financial perspective, this represents unrecovered capital expenditure, because the construction of the schemes is partially funded through sale of water entitlements.

Once a scheme is constructed any unsold capacity, or unsold water, is carried as debt by Tasmanian Irrigation. The interest payments on this debt are currently funded by the Tasmanian Government.

While 100 per cent of water entitlements have been sold on the majority of Tasmanian Irrigation's schemes around the State, we are aiming to substantially reduce the amount of remaining unsold water by selling a range of products, including winter water entitlements in certain schemes.

"The aim is to reduce the amount of debt being carried and to maximise the volume of water available to irrigators who can use it to boost their production potential."

Increasing the water entitlements sold in a scheme will reduce fixed costs for irrigators on those schemes.

Recent meetings with Irrigator Representative Committees (IRCs) on several schemes have given Tasmanian Irrigation a greater understanding of what demand exists locally.

The results of this market sounding will be presented to the Tasmanian Irrigation Board in August, with a recommendation to take new products to market, and open Expressions of Interest and / or tender processes across several schemes.

Tasmanian Irrigation publishes a list of unsold entitlements on our website, detailing the available volume and price on a scheme-by-scheme basis.

This information can be accessed from: www.tasmanianirrigation.com.au/buy-unsold-entitlements

For more information about buying or leasing unsold entitlements, please contact Tasmanian Irrigation on (03) 6398-8433 or watertrading@tasirrigation.com.au.



Telstra's 3G Network

Telstra recently announced it will extend the closure of the 3G network by two months until 31 August 2024.

Telstra has advised that any person using devices that rely on 3G for either data, voice or emergency calls will need to prepare to stay connected when it switches off.

If you are unsure if your device is impacted, you can SMS '3' to 3498 (3G XT) and Telstra's checker will respond, confirming what action you need to take.

For more information, please visit: www.telstra.com.au/exchange/3g-network-closure-extended

Meet the Irrigator

John Fehlberg



John Fehlberg sees opportunity where many see obstacles.

Whether value adding, diversifying, intensifying, enhancing reliability or securing new markets, John has one underlying enabling factor – water.

A former electrical engineer, John returned to the family farm at Brighton in 1982 and immediately saw an opportunity to add value to their stock feed growing and milling business by establishing their own retail outlet.

Fehlberg's Produce was born.

But to guarantee continuity of supply to their growing customer base, John realised an immediate need for irrigated land so they added a further 500 acres at Richmond to their landholding of 500 acres at Brighton.

He purchased a 40-megalitre water licence through the South East Irrigation Scheme Stage Two, invested in centre pivots and soft hose irrigators and increased production of oats, lucerne, barley and wheat for stock feed manufacturing.

Now, 42 years later, John is researching the next stage of diversification – again due to water.

John is investigating opportunities to grow white asparagus for high-end Australian restaurants and export markets, as well as paprika in poly tunnels. The progression of the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme is essential for John to progress his plans further. He will apply for a further 40 megalitres of high-surety irrigation water for his Richmond farm, and an additional 40 megalitres at Brighton across both summer and winter takes. And he is installing another centre pivot at Richmond, which can be towed to operate across two sites.

"We can't do anything without water," John said.

"We have great climate, hours of sunlight, protection from wind and proximity to market. We just need capital and water.

"We have all seen what irrigation has brought to the Coal River Valley and that's what we will see here in the Brighton region if the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme goes ahead.

"We currently have a little bit of irrigation on our farm at Brighton from an existing bore and some off-peak water from TasWater that is getting more and more expensive, and we really don't need treated water.

Meet the Irrigator continued...

"Due to the dry last year and this year, we sold off 600 wethers and we couldn't cut any hay. Unfortunately we have been unable to supply some of our stock feed lines because we couldn't get enough lucerne.

"Irrigation will mitigate this issue, enabling us to guarantee supply."

Fehlberg's Produce now annually sells 200 tonnes of oat chaff, 100 tonnes of lucerne chaff, 100 tonnes of horse feed mixes, 120 tonnes of wheat and wheat-based poultry mix, 90 tonnes of barley, 60 tonnes of oats and a wide range of other stock feeds for livestock, horses, birds, rabbits, guinea pigs and other commercial and domestic animals.

Molasses-coated feed mixes for performance racing lines are interspersed instore with animal health products, fencing materials, pipes and fittings, and other rural merchandise.

The store has become a much-needed source of capital for on-farm investment, as well as succession planning and irrigation investment.

John said another advantage of irrigation water is the capacity for farms to attract and support the next generation of young people in agriculture.

His two nephews – currently working as a paramedic and fireman – are planning to return to the Fehlberg agricultural businesses.

John encouraged all south east Tasmanian farmers to consider investing in the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme to create jobs and regional prosperity.

"If you have money invested somewhere else and it's giving you a pretty pittance return, then if you can afford it, put your money into Tasmania's irrigation schemes.

"Some may not need the water every year, but then you will have years like this year, and you will need every drop of water you can get."

"We can only do this with access to reliable and quality irrigation water.

"Now that we know the value of water from Tasmanian Irrigation, if for any reason the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme did not go ahead, we will likely relocate from Brighton to another area with irrigation water."



Operations

By David Skipper, Chief Operating Officer



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 2023/2024 summer irrigation season has drawn to a close, marking another successful period for irrigation schemes across Tasmania.

Water delivery was 70 per cent above forecast for the financial year-to-date (as of 30 April).

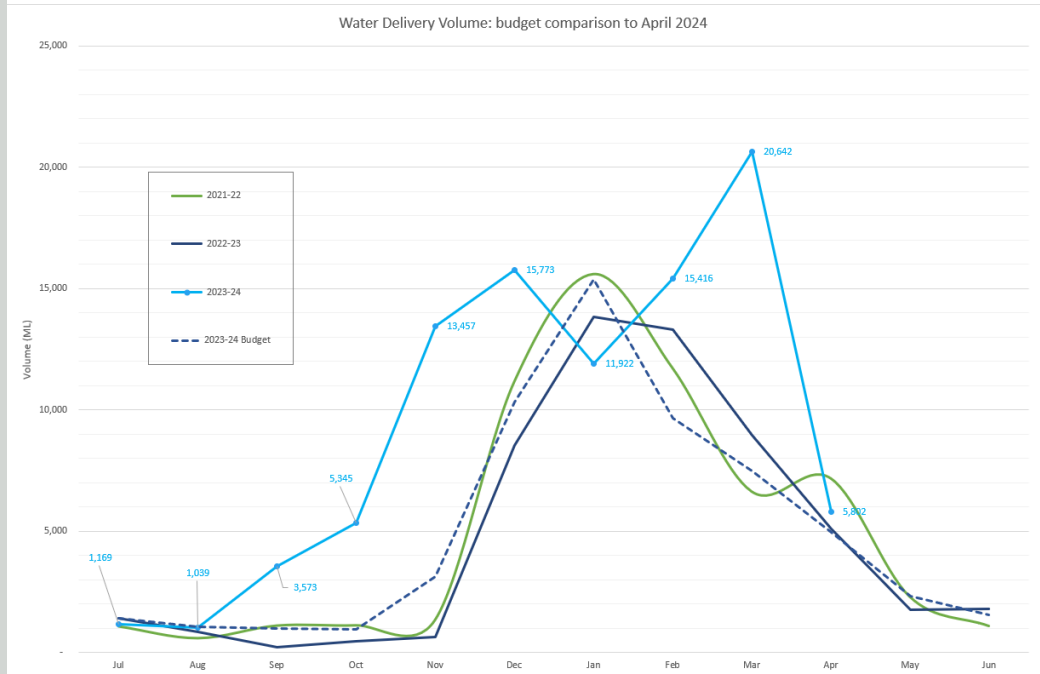
The demand for irrigation water — due to the dry and warm weather in Tasmania continuing through March — has resulted in the highest ever delivery in a month (March) and year for TI.

This is demonstrated in the graph below.

Throughout the 2023/24 season, schemes faced a range of issues, from weather-related challenges to mechanical and technical concerns.

However, proactive measures and collaborative efforts ensured that these challenges were swiftly addressed, minimising disruptions to operations.

The dedication and hard work of Scheme Operators, coupled with the support of irrigators, have been instrumental in ensuring the success of the season.



Note: Four schemes closed on 31 March. An additional 12 schemes closed in April. The remaining schemes deliver water 365 days a year. Tasmanian Irrigation delivered a total of 94,137 megalitres to the end of April.



The historical volumes from July to April are as follows:

Year (1 July to 30 April)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Delivered (ML)	81,557	53,757	57,550	53,368	94,137
% change from previous year		-34%	7%	-7%	76%

How the extended dry autumn impacted demand

The extended dry 2024 autumn had a significant impact on irrigation demand across all Tasmanian Irrigation schemes.

Typically, autumn is a period when irrigation demand begins to decrease as cooler temperatures and increased rainfall reduce the need for supplemental irrigation.

However, the prolonged dry spell experienced during the autumn months delayed this decrease in demand and even led to an increase in water requirements for many irrigators.

The lack of significant rainfall during the autumn season has resulted in reduced soil moisture levels. As a result, irrigators have had to rely more heavily on irrigation to meet the water needs of their crops and pastures.

Additionally, the dry conditions have likely affected the growth and development of crops and pastures, leading to increased water requirements to support plant growth. This has further contributed to the higher demand for irrigation water during the extended dry autumn period.

Overall, these seasonal conditions have highlighted the importance of reliable water supply infrastructure and effective water management practices in mitigating the impacts of drought on agricultural production.

Extension to the irrigation season on some schemes

Tasmanian Irrigation made a decision in mid-February to extend the summer irrigation season for many schemes. Typically, a majority of schemes close by mid to late March with the onset of cooler and wetter weather.

Out of the 19 schemes, 12 received extensions to their seasons.

It's not always possible to extend a season, and from scheme to scheme there will be local conditions that prevent this happening. For example, this year we had essential work to undertake on the augmentation of the Greater Meander Scheme as soon as the season closed.

Despite the Greater Meander Scheme, which traditionally closes on 30 March, adhering to its usual schedule, the continuation of dry conditions and ongoing augmentation works prompted Tasmanian Irrigation to collaborate with affected Meander irrigators.

This collaboration aimed to provide "out of season" water to support them until the arrival of winter or significant rainfall.

This cooperative effort not only assisted irrigators, but also enabled Tasmanian Irrigation to progress crucial construction works, ultimately aiming for full augmentation of the scheme by October 2024.

And on the Don Irrigation Scheme, the funding arrangements and scheme design mean that Tasmanian Irrigation will not be able to extend the summer season in future years.

Extending seasons is a significant decision, given its wide-ranging implications for Tasmanian Irrigation operations.

It presents challenges to maintaining the mandated 95 per cent reliability, while also placing strain on dam storages, potentially limiting their ability to recharge before the next season.

In many cases where dams are extremely low, the refill must be staged and incrementally filled slowly as the dry clay absorbs water ensuring a watertight and safe dam.

This process can delay refill by many weeks or possibly months. Extension of the season increases the risk to irrigators exceeding their annual allocations, especially if they maintain their flow rate over this longer extension.

Additionally, extending the season can restrict the commercial trading of irrigation rights among irrigators who seek the opportunity to profitably trade their allocation.

Extending the season also adds pressure to asset management, as well as the completion of essential repairs, maintenance and asset renewal programs during the off-season in preparation for the next season.

All of these responsibilities can only begin once the summer irrigation season concludes, meters are read, and water usage is invoiced, and must be finalised before any scheme can resume operations.

Outlook for winter

The Bureau of Meteorology's recent three-month summary indicates that southern Tasmania is facing an almost equal chance of above or below average rainfall.

There's 30 to 40 per cent probability of unusually low rainfall across much of Tasmania from May to July. Moreover, the Bureau predicts a heightened likelihood of unusually high maximum and minimum temperatures for Australia during the same period.



June 2024

In essence, forecasts suggest a drier than normal winter ahead with warmer temperatures for the next three months. If combined with a positive Southern Annular Mode, Tasmania's farming / arable areas can expect low rainfall, impacting our dam levels and potentially leading to earlier and extended water scheme openings with reliability below 95 per cent and potential reduction in allocations across a number of schemes.

Dam levels

At this end point of the season, our primary supply dams are experiencing very low levels. We will closely oversee the dam replenishment program throughout the upcoming winter and spring season.

However, there is concern regarding the ability of several dams to fully recharge, particularly if rain events occur sporadically or are untimely concerning our water license conditions. Furthermore, if long-term rainfall is insufficient or fails to materialise, this could exacerbate the situation.

To view TI dam levels, go to:

www.tasmanianirrigation.com.au/dam-levels

Upcoming IRC meetings

Tasmanian Irrigation is working to convene 19 face-to-face meetings with irrigator representatives in regional settings, grouping together two or three schemes at a time.

End-of-season newsletters are being distributed, offering detailed insights into each scheme's performance during the past season, and providing a snapshot of financial performance, forecasted expenditures, and asset maintenance planning.

Additionally, preparations are underway for the forthcoming 2024/25 pre-season newsletter, which provides irrigators with essential information regarding each scheme's water pricing, encompassing fixed and variable charges.

Energy on Farms Solar Project

The final commissioning of the Shannon River solar array will be completed after the season closure.

Groundworks have commenced for the Smithton site and planning activities are progressing well for Mount Seymour and Barrington pump stations.

The South Riana array was cancelled when no agreement could be made between TI and the landowner.

Investigations are underway to identify new opportunities.

Dam safety

The annual dam safety report each year identifies specific maintenance activities that are required to be completed. Much of the activity is completed in the off season due to operator availability, and dam levels (generally high until late in season).

There are currently no intolerable dam safety risks and all regulatory compliance reporting is on schedule for completion by the end of the financial year.



Solar array installation at the Shannon River pump station on the Southern Highlands Irrigation Scheme

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:

Greater South East Irrigation Scheme (GSEIS)

Capacity: 37,200 megalitres
Area serviced: Jordan River Valley, Brighton, Richmond, Dulcote, Cambridge, Colebrook, Campania, Tea Tree, Orielton, Pawleena, Penna, Sorell and Forcett areas

The Greater South East Irrigation Scheme project team is assessing all options for this critical project given no funding commitment in the 2024 Federal Budget.

The Tasmanian Government announced its funding for the 37,200-megalitre project, covering some of the driest areas of the State, during the election campaign.

The GSEIS would integrate the three existing irrigation schemes, meet demand for new water and address reliability and cost issues for farmers.

The existing South East Stages Two and Three rely on treated water from TasWater, which is a long-held concern due to the rising cost, competing pressures for supply and uncertainty of supply during potable water restrictions.

Tasmanian Irrigation briefed irrigators at a meeting last week and will continue to provide regular updates in the hope that the project can continue to move forward.

We sincerely thank all irrigators for their understanding and rest assured, we are as determined as you to see the project proceed.



Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme

Capacity: 25,500 megalitres

Area serviced: Macquarie, Barton, Conara, Campbell Town, Ross and the Lower Isis Valley

Construction of the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme is expected to commence mid this year, subject to the Federal Government approving the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) permit. No work can occur until this approval is received.

Initial landowner liaison by the contractor has commenced and will be ongoing throughout the project.

The buffer dam design is progressing with Tasmanian Irrigation's design partner and contractor, as well as the pipe manufacturing.

Once the project works start, pipe will be delivered to site, the contractor will commence site mobilisation and lay down areas will be established.

Tasmanian Irrigation is looking forward to working with landowners to deliver this important irrigation infrastructure for the region.

Greater Meander Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

Augmentation:

11,000 ML

Total scheme capacity: 39,800 ML

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

Pipeline upgrade works conducted by Poly Welding Solutions have now entered the final phase of pressure testing, and are being interconnected into the existing mainlines.

The end of the dry irrigation season has required consultation with irrigators relying on pipeline systems.

This aimed to minimise the impact of ongoing works at Greater Meander on general availability water until the start of next season.

Interruptions to supply are the result of final pipeline works during autumn and the upgrading of Caveside and Quamby pump stations through the winter / spring.

Tasmanian firm Sub41 has been contracted to upgrade the pump stations at Caveside and Quamby. This work will utilise Tasmanian civil, electrical and mechanical contractors.

Greater Meander Works



Preparing to test new connection at Caveside



Pressure testing at Quamby



New property outlet



Gauging weir

In order to reduce the duration of these upgrade works, Tasmanian Irrigation has preordered long-lead time items.

Gauging weirs that enable improved monitoring of water flows along water courses have commenced construction.

PWS and its local subcontractors have commenced remediation works, including reseeding, fence and track repairs, along with preparing construction information for future records.

Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation (SWISA)

Augmentation: 9,200 ML

Total scheme capacity: 14,860 ML

Area serviced: Sassafras, Harford, Thirlstane, Moriarty, Wesley Vale, Northdown, Pardoe and East Devonport

Additional environmental surveys are currently underway for work on the EPBC preliminary documentation.

Realignments and other strategies are being put in place to mitigate the impact of SWISA construction on the Tasmanian devil, the eastern quoll and spotted-tail quoll, the green and gold frog, the central north burrowing crayfish, the Tasmanian masked owl, native orchids and the swift parrot.

A position is now open for a new IRC member. Please forward applications to david.skipper@tasirrigation.com.au.

Outlet upgrade applications are still available. Please contact scott.ohalloran@tasirrigation.com.au.

There are still some volumes of summer water available for purchase in various trading zones, contact john.wright@tasirrigation.com.au for more information.

Tamar Irrigation Scheme

Capacity: TBC

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

Unfortunately the second round of water sales did not generate sufficient interest to justify the project at the proposed 13,500 megalitre capacity. The 5,800 ML level of applications represents less than half the required level of investment by farmers to justify the proposed scheme.

Tasmanian Irrigation is now examining a range of options for the future of the project, including assessing whether the scheme is still viable at a significantly smaller scale, potentially 8,500 ML.

A further update to landowners is expected by late June.



Enhancing Farm Business Resilience

By Amy Madsen, TI Environmental Officer — Compliance



How many farmers have integrated climate risks and opportunities into their farm business plan to ensure sustainable agricultural practices in the face of evolving environmental conditions?

Climate Risk in Practice — a recent field day and workshop hosted by Resilient Farming Tas — was a great opportunity to explore proactive strategies to navigate uncertainties in agricultural operations.

Attendees heard from Will Eddington, owner of Richmond Park Estate, who shared his journey of adapting to climate risks and opportunities across his mixed cropping, sheep and viticulture enterprises.

He outlined his aspirations for future growth and diversification, including plans to hopefully secure more reliable water through Tasmanian Irrigation's Greater South East Irrigation Scheme (GSEIS) and expand his vineyard to capitalise on emerging agribusiness opportunities in the region.

Will's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainable farming practices also provides a marketing advantage for future agritourism ventures.

A panel discussion, featuring business advisors and growers, delved into various aspects of resilience planning, ranging from succession planning to climate change adaptation and investment decision-making.

Attendees also had the opportunity to participate in a hands-on farm business case study, emphasising the importance of identifying and mitigating key risks, with water scarcity in the Coal River Valley emerging as a significant concern.

A highlight of the event was the opportunity to learn more about the Resilient Farming Tas program. This initiative offers tailored Farm Business Resilience Plans designed to manage risks and leverage opportunities.

The program is supported by funding from the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Tasmanian Government's Rural Business Resilience Package, and aims to equip Tasmanian farm businesses with the tools and strategies needed to thrive in a changing environment.

The program is open to any Tasmanian farm business registered for GST and not a corporate entity. Registration is open until March 2025.



There are opportunities to offset the participation cost of \$500 through the Future Drought Fund and the Australian Government.

You can find out more about the program and register your interest here: www.tasfarmingfutures.com.au/resilient-farming-tas-expression-of-interest.



Taking the Pulse of the River

By Jesse Lewis, TI Environmental Specialist — Ecology and Sustainability



Tasmanian Irrigation regularly conducts environmental monitoring activities, taking the pulse of the natural environments in which we operate.

Environmental Specialist Jesse Lewis shares a glimpse beneath the surface at our river monitoring sites in the Meander Valley and Midlands...

I'm pushing against the current in waders, and the cobbles and boulders that line the riverbed are slick with algae.

Kicking the river stones around my feet, I slowly push upstream, collecting whatever I disturb into my waiting net.

I'm looking for the unnoticed water bugs that wiggle across the rocks and hide along the bottom. Otherwise known as macro-invertebrates, these small creatures occur widely across river and stream ecosystems and can tell us a lot about the health of our waterways.

Every autumn and spring, the Australian River Assessment (AusRivAs) kicks off across Australia to shine a light on these micro worlds.

Since 1994, this nation-wide standard has been used to assess the health of our rivers in response to growing concern over the degradation of their ecological values. Tasmanian Irrigation contributes to AusRivAs assessments as part of its State and Federal compliance through monitoring programs in both the Meander Valley and Midlands schemes.

Having collected a good sample of bugs and debris in my net, I dump everything into a tray to be picked through.

Then the real challenge begins.

Sitting down with tweezers to count and identify the microorganisms we've found.

The goal is to reach roughly 200 individuals within 30 minutes. No easy task considering how tiny many of these creatures are, and the difficulty in grabbing them.

Practice makes perfect though, and, soon we're getting through our sample. Preserved in collecting vials, the specimens are now ready to be analysed in a lab.



Taking the pulse of the river continued...

Compared to previous years, there seems to be more algae in the river, possibly a sign of the warmer and drier conditions this summer, which can help supercharge algae growth.

Too much algae can cause an imbalance, sucking up oxygen and nutrients, coating hard surfaces in scum and increasing turbidity.

These are all things that can degrade water quality.



This is where macroinvertebrates can help. Some macroinvertebrate families function as bio-indicators.

Like canaries in a coal mine, insect families such as *Trichoptera* (caddisflies) and *Plecoptera* (stoneflies) are particularly sensitive to degraded water quality.

Thus, their presence can be indicative of good stream health, while their absence may point to a polluted or degraded stream environment.

Monitoring the macroinvertebrate communities above and below sites of dams, weirs and other modifications can show patterns and trends year by year.

If the numbers and diversity of these insect communities dramatically change, it can alert us to harmful events in the environment which would trigger a response.

In this way our annual monitoring is like a check-up visit, an opportunity to take the pulse of the river and give a clean bill of health.

We'll wait to get the final verdict once our samples are returned.

Despite the warmer and drier conditions so far, this year's field sampling looks largely on track with other years reflecting high water quality around these schemes.





TASMANIAN IRRIGATION — MEET THE TEAM

Marty Wilson

Tasmanian Irrigation title: Senior Project Manager.

Brief summary of work history: I studied Mechanical Engineering before entering the Site Management / Project Management / Quality Management space, working across manufacturing, mining and industrial processing. I spent a few years in protective coatings inspection and testing before spending the majority of the last 15+ years as a Civil Construction Project Manager with Shaw Contracting and most recently Hazell Bros.

Brief description of your current role: Supporting Tasmanian Irrigation's northern Project Teams to deliver the current irrigation projects and build a consistent framework for the development of future projects.

What do you enjoy most about working at Tasmanian Irrigation: The challenge of a new working environment (I joined TI about four months ago) and understanding the intricacies of the business.

Favourite book: I don't have one as I have never been a big novel reader. I tend to stick to journals or magazines.

Favourite food: Hard to go past a great flame-grilled steak with a nice pepper or mushroom sauce (sometimes both)!

Favourite movie: Top Gun Maverick was one of the most recent, but the original Star Wars trilogy were my favourites growing up.

Favourite holiday destination: The next one, it's good to have something to look forward to.

Best piece of advice for the next generation: Hard work and perseverance will always pay off and don't sweat the small stuff, it will distract you from all the good things.

If I was Prime Minister for a day, I would: Increase taxes on the very rich and corporates who don't pay their fair share and put that money into health and aged care. Then I would fund a roofed stadium in Hobart, as well as basketball / netball precincts in Launceston / Devonport that will provide adequate facilities for all kids to pursue the sports they enjoy.

The three people you would invite to share dinner with you:

1. Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, as I always enjoyed his Triple J Q&A segments, he has such a broad knowledge and passion for all things science and engineering;
2. LeBron James, my youngest daughter's favourite player; and
3. Taylor Swift, not my favourite artist, but the rest of the family are Swifties.

Upcoming Events



Please visit Tasmanian Irrigation's website at www.tasmanianirrigation.com.au to 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 and LinkedIn.

Forecast upcoming events include:

Mid 2024

Northern Midlands construction commences



Tasmanian Irrigation

For more information about this newsletter, please contact:

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