

Branch Out

SHARING TASMANIA'S IRRIGATION STORIES

Message from the CEO

By Andrew Kneebone

2023 is off to a great start across the entire spectrum of Tasmanian Irrigation's business.

Our Water Delivery team has had an exceptionally busy January and February, with 38,969 megalitres of water delivered across our 18 operational schemes so far this season.

The wet start to the season resulted in lower than expected demand prior to Christmas. However, the hot weather in early January caused large spikes in irrigation water demand as farmers required water to finish crops – later than usual due to the delayed season.

I'd like to acknowledge David Skipper and his team, especially the Scheme Operators who work so hard to ensure our customers receive their irrigation water when it's needed most.

Our Program Development and Delivery team has also set a cracking pace this year.

Water Sales have now concluded for the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme and more than 350 applications for water entitlements were received.

This is a great result for this region and we will be

communicating with all landowners in the near future regarding the results of their applications, as well as a redesign based on actual demand.

Construction on the Don / Barrington Irrigation Scheme is progressing very well with all of the Don pipe network finished and great progress being made on the Sheffield / Barrington component.

Work is also progressing on the pump stations at Lake Barrington and on the Forth River.

The Tasmanian Government has approved the Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme Business Case and has commenced work to secure the Federal Government's funding contribution.

It is anticipated that tenders for this 25,500 megalitre project will be released mid 2023.

The Business Case for the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation is being reviewed by the Tasmanian Government and the next steps for the Tamar Irrigation Scheme and the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme will be announced in the coming weeks.



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Message from the CEO continued...

Construction has just started on the Solar on Farms Project, which will see solar arrays installed at up to 12 Tasmanian Irrigation pump station sites around the State.

These arrays are expected to deliver direct savings to farmers by offsetting electricity usage and generating surplus power to be fed back into the grid.

Early work has also commenced on the Lake Leake Dam restoration project and we are on track to start construction on the Greater Meander Irrigation Scheme Augmentation in May.

Like everyone, Tasmanian Irrigation is facing increased costs across its operating divisions. We are currently writing to all irrigators to outline how these changes will impact the 2023/24 season. We are aiming to keep fixed cost increases broadly in line with CPI. However, electricity costs are unfortunately forecast to rise by up to 70 per cent.

"As always, Tasmanian Irrigation will work as hard as possible to minimise any cost increases for our customers."

We have also had a number of changes to the Tasmanian Irrigation Board. Samantha Hogg finished her second term as Chair in December, and we thank Sam for her leadership, strategic input and support during the past six years.

Water industry professional and civil engineer Kate Vinot has been appointed as the new Board Chair. Kate, a Yarra Valley Water Board Director with extensive skills across engineering, business, economics, capital project delivery, asset management, governance and strategic change, is passionate about providing water services that support prosperous, growing and vibrant communities.

Please take a moment to learn more about Kate on page three of this newsletter.

Tasmanian Irrigation also welcomes former KPMG Chartered Accountant Hugh McKenzie to the Board as a Director. Hugh, a Launceston City Council Alderman and Chair of the Launceston Airport, provided accounting advice to Tasmanian farmers for more than 35 years while at KPMG and has a strong interest in helping to improve production and the viability of farms.

Kate and Hugh join Abigail Foley, Laura McBain and Judith Lyne on the Tasmanian Irrigation Board.

One of our irrigators recently asked me "what does the Board do"?

So I am today sharing an insight into the functions and strict governance that our Board operates under.

Tasmanian Irrigation is owned by the Tasmanian Government.

The five independent Non-Executive Directors, including the Chairperson, are appointed by Tasmanian Irrigation's Shareholder Ministers – the Treasurer (the Hon. Michael Ferguson and the Minister for Primary Industries and Water (the Hon. Jo Palmer).

The Company and Board operate under an effective corporate governance system consistent with the Australian Stock Exchange's key principles and recommendations, as well as the Tasmanian Government's Government Business Governance Framework.

The Board is responsible for setting strategic direction to Tasmanian Irrigation, reviewing the performance of the CEO, adopting stringent and appropriate processes for risk assessment and management, ensuring accountability to the Government Shareholders and to appear before and respond to Parliamentary Scrutiny Committees when required.

A great example of one of the Board's roles is assessing each of the new irrigation projects. Our team submits detailed reports on key milestones as each project is developed, such as Expressions of Interest, Preferred Option Design, Water Sales, business case approval and recommendation to construct.

This is all part of Tasmanian Irrigation's commitment to ensuring all schemes developed and operated are economically viable, environmentally sustainable, have strong community endorsement, and are designed to endure at least 100 years and deliver water at an average annual reliability of more than 95 per cent per annum.

I remain incredibly proud that the Board and the Tasmanian Irrigation team have an unwavering focus to providing sustainable, reliable and cost effective irrigation water to grow the Tasmanian economy. There is no doubt that the unique funding partnership between the Tasmanian Government, Australian Government and our State's farmers continues to grow the wealth of the State.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Branch Out.

Cheers,

Andrew

Clarification: The recently announced additional \$100 million from the Australian Government is a contribution to the first five projects of the Tranche Three program, not six projects as previously stated.

A Chat with the Chair
Kate Vinot



Water industry professional and civil engineer Kate Vinot was recently appointed Chair of Tasmanian Irrigation. We thank Kate for taking the time to share a few details about her background, career achievements and vision for irrigation in Tasmania...

Name: Kate Vinot.

Position: Chair of Tasmanian Irrigation.

Date of appointment: 16 December 2022.

Brief overview of current career and board positions: In addition to this exciting new role, I am currently a Board member at Yarra Valley Water, in Victoria, and at Natural Hazards Research Australia. My career has included a range of Board and Executive roles in water and land management and in critical infrastructure. I have been on the Boards of GWM Water, Parks Victoria and Zoos Victoria, and an Executive at Veolia Water, South East Water, the City of Melbourne and at the Bureau of Meteorology.

Why did you decide to pursue a career as a civil engineer? I like the tangible 'doing' that comes with an engineering career. I wanted to help create infrastructure that benefits our economy and community, whilst protecting our environment for present and future generations. I started as a geotechnical engineer, but quickly realised that it takes many different skills to deliver on that vision. I completed a Masters in Economics for Development and, later, an MBA, and have been fortunate to work in and lead diverse teams that share a passion for delivering long term value through infrastructure.

What attracted you to opportunities in the water industry? The people and the purpose. Water is essential to our economy, community and environment, and the people that work in the industry are incredibly passionate about what they do. They inspire me every day.

As the new Chair, please share your strategic vision for Tasmanian Irrigation? Our mission is 'Helping to grow the wealth of Tasmania'. That means working with the community and our partners to create water infrastructure and services that enhance the climate resilience and prosperity of Tasmania, now and for future generations.

What are your immediate priorities to further boost Tasmanian Irrigation's water delivery and program development and delivery capacity? Our water infrastructure will deliver positive outcomes for the State for many generations. Right now, we have a very big capital works program to deliver, and we have customers on existing schemes that we need to serve as efficiently and effectively as we can whilst setting up a sustainable service for the long term. Currently there are some major economic pressures that aren't at all unique to us, but they affect our programs and our prices. We need to communicate clearly on what needs to be done, collaborate to find solutions, and innovate and optimise how we work, all the while ensuring we deliver value for present and future generations.

Tasmania's irrigation infrastructure is often described as the envy of the nation. Would you agree with this statement? It certainly seems less complex to share water within one State especially when, overall, water is more reliable and in greater relative quantities here than to our north. Our infrastructure is also more modern than the open channel systems that have had to be upgraded and replaced in many parts of Australia. But in a nation exposed to La Ninas and El Ninos, these are huge generalisations and Tasmania has its own distinctive challenges. For example, the nexus between water and energy is quite different in Tasmania.

On a personal level, what are your favourite non-work activities? I am a keen hiker and sailor. I've done some of the major walks in Tasmania and sailed in a Melbourne-Devonport race, but our usual craft is a dinghy.

Three items on your bucket list: I love being outdoors and travelling. My bucket list includes doing more long distance walks in Tasmania, cycling some rail trails, and visiting my four adult kids who now live interstate and overseas.

Caitlin Radford and Owen Woolley

Caitlin Radford and Owen Woolley are firmly cementing themselves as the next generation of Tasmanian agricultural leaders.

Caitlin, a fifth generation farmer from Moriarty, and Owen, who has worked on farms in Cressy and Canada and also owns a building company in Hobart, have an unwavering commitment to learning, innovation, technology and hard work.

They have intertwined their numerous skills and strengths and have progressed from share farming with Caitlin's grandfather to leasing the 112-acre "Woodville" farm, purchasing the 136-acre "Kenroy Vale" in Moriarty and forming a new company Radco Agriculture with Caitlin's parents to include the 270-acre "Hillcrest" family farm.

"When I completed year 12, I went to the mainland to work on a horse place and then returned home to start an apprentice on our family farm," Caitlin said.

"It was a great way to gain a more in-depth understanding of agriculture and when my Pop decided at 86 years of age to slow down a little, the opportunity to share farm with him arose.

"Since then, Owen and I, together with Mum and Dad, have been able to expand, diversify, establish new crop rotations and adopt a new approach to sustainability."

This year the family partnership produced a range of vegetables, including beans, potatoes, broccoli, peas and carrots, as well as wheat, grass seed and silage.

They are also growing brussels sprouts for the first time, and the crop is looking promising. They expect to harvest the sprouts in May.

Caitlin and Owen agree that a number of vital factors have helped them to establish and expand their business.

"We are extremely fortunate to have had help from a lot of really knowledgeable people, as well as access to irrigation water from the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme," Caitlin said.

"The augmentation of the Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme means everything to us – more water, more consistent flow rate and more opportunities to move water between our properties."



Meet the Irrigators continued...

"Water is everything. You can't rely on the rain. Just look at this year. It was so wet before December and now it is so dry. One of our top priorities is to invest in water and water infrastructure.

"Pop's property is the last one on the line for this zone of the existing Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme, so if everyone has their water turned on, we have poor flow and it fluctuates a lot.

"Our properties are currently in different zones so we can't transfer water between each farm easily.

"Tasmanian Irrigation's augmentation of the SWIS scheme will be a real game changer. We have applied for an additional 160 megalitres across our properties. We are putting in two pivots to replace hard hoses and we are experimenting with a variable rate pivot to ensure we apply the optimum amount of water to each area of the paddock."

Owen and Caitlin are also spending a great deal of time planning their future farming operations to achieve the best possible balance between soil, water, disease management and sustainability.

Caitlin is bringing many fresh ideas to the table thanks to recent opportunities, including Primary Employers Tasmania's Agri-Development Scholarship that enabled her to attend the RaboBank Farm Managers' Program.

She also spent three weeks touring farms through Scandinavia with the International Farm Management Congress due to a bursary from RMCG.

Through their many voluntary roles, including Rural Youth, the Agfest Committee and horse clubs, Owen and Caitlin are always being inspired to overcome challenges, strive for excellence, support their community and continue to sustainably grow their farming business.

And they agree whole-heartedly that water is key to their future success.

SWISA Project Snapshot

Existing SWIS capacity	5,460 ML
Augmentation	9,200 ML
Final scheme capacity	14,660 ML
Forecast cost	\$100 million
No. of irrigators	135
KMs of pipeline	102km
Pump stations	2
Estimated construction start	Mid 2024
First full season	2026 / 27



Water Delivery

By David Skipper, General Manager Water Delivery



Tasmanian Irrigation's Water Delivery Team is responsible for the operation of 18 irrigation schemes around Tasmania, and the delivery of irrigation water in an efficient, economically viable and environmentally sustainable manner to almost 1,000 irrigators.

Tasmanian Irrigation employs 14 skilled and dedicated Scheme Operators to manage and administer each scheme.

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

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY

Tasmania has experienced very similar weather conditions to the previous season, and in many areas around the State it has been a wetter and cooler spring than 2021.

Our water delivery volumes in the table below demonstrate the soft start to the season with September, October and November being the lowest delivery of irrigation water in the past three years.

December, January and February have seen a marked upturn with the hotter and drier conditions prevailing.

Since the start of 2023, dry and windy weather has prevailed and due to a wet spring, crops are two to three weeks behind their normal ripening patterns, requiring sustained watering.

Tasmanian Irrigation's operations have experienced a marked upturn in usage of water over this period.

It is pleasing to report that Tasmanian Irrigation has had no major interruptions to service this season and that all schemes have been productively delivering water to all their irrigators.

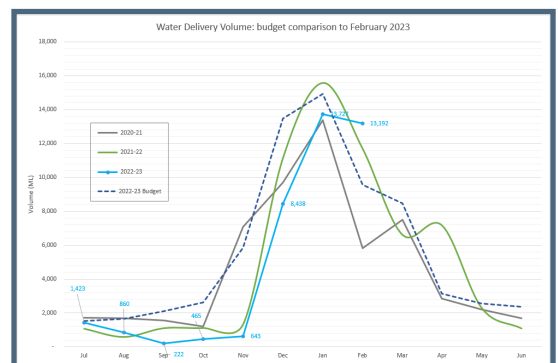
"The programmed maintenance and asset renewals undertaken over the past few years have certainly paid dividends and allowed Tasmanian Irrigation to maintain a greater than 95 per cent reliability in the physical delivery of water."

This table shows Tasmanian Irrigation's volume deliveries (at 26 February 2023)...

	Actual (ML)	Budget (ML)	Variance (ML)	Variance (%)
Monthly volume	13,192	9,577	3,615	38%
YTD Volume	38,969	51,756	(12,786)	(25%)

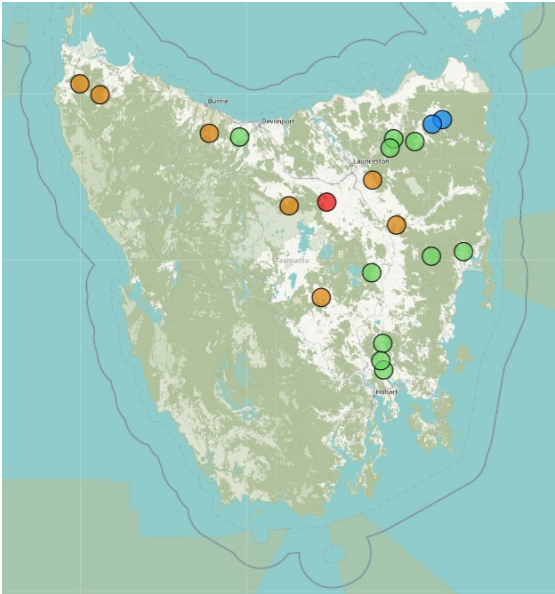
Water delivery for February was 38 per cent above budget.

The budget is based on the average of the last three years ML delivered. Where the scheme has not been in operation for three years, either an average of two years or the most recent year has been used for the basis of the budget, whichever is most appropriate.



WATER STORAGE

All dams are at appropriate levels for this time in the irrigation season. Liffey and Riley's creek are small buffer storages and do not pose any seasonal operational risk.



Dam Name	Full Supply Level	Dam Level Latest	+/- from FSL	Total Volume	Current Volume	% Fill
Frome Dam	329.00	329.07	0.07	2,000	2,158	108%
Cascade Dam	342.47	342.49	0.02	3,450	3,461	100%
Lake Leake Dam	571.50	571.33	-0.17	22,076	20,978	95%
Craigbourne Dam	166.20	165.80	-0.40	12,600	11,893	94%
Melrose Dam	62.00	61.30	-0.70	3,440	3,191	93%
Rekuna Dam	165.00	164.86	-0.14	207	190	92%
Dunns Creek Dam	288.00	286.20	-1.80	6,680	5,608	84%
Daisy Bank Dam	126.50	125.39	-1.11	186	156	84%
Camden Rivulet Dam	577.50	576.62	-0.88	9,780	8,192	84%
Sprent Dam	221.00	220.52	-0.48	259	216	84%
Upper Floods Creek Dam	307.00	306.21	-0.79	500	412	82%
Headquarters Rd Dam	283.00	281.86	-1.14	2,330	1,914	82%
South Riana Dam	299.75	298.25	-1.50	4,069	3,210	79%
Upper Galeford Dam	53.28	52.28	-1.00	109	86	79%
Milford Dam	203.35	201.43	-1.92	5,996	4,370	73%
Rocklands Dam	240.40	237.72	-2.68	5,580	3,848	69%
Southernfield Dam	542.65	539.20	-3.45	8,162	5,580	68%
Mill Creek Dam	58.50	55.24	-3.26	6,275	4,024	64%
Meander Dam	402.00	396.26	-5.74	43,000	25,134	58%
Liffey Holding Dam	195.32	193.65	-1.67	97	48	50%

Energy on Farms — Renewable Energy Project Update

In 2018 as part of the election commitment, the State Government provided Tasmanian Irrigation a \$5.5 million fund as part of the Tasmanian Government's Energy on Farms Policy.

Working with irrigators, Tasmanian Irrigation will construct renewable, mini and or micro hydro generation systems as part of the irrigation system network. Tasmanian Irrigation's Energy on Farms program comprises three separate activities to reduce operating costs and pass on savings to farmers. These activities are:

1. Refurbishment of the Meander Mini Hydro Power Generation Plant;
2. Upgrading water pump stations with high efficiency motors to reduce running costs; and
3. Installing solar arrays at pump stations to offset power consumption costs.

To reduce the costs for farmers and make our irrigation schemes more efficient, the

Tasmanian Government is investing \$2.5 million toward the upgrade of the Meander mini-hydro power station, \$0.4 million towards installation of high efficiency pump motors and a further \$2.6 million for solar upgrades across a number of irrigation schemes.

The solar panels will generate power, which will reduce the operating costs of the schemes – with savings passed on to farmers.

High efficiency electric motors will be installed to existing pump sets to reduce electrical consumption - with savings passed on to farmers. Installing renewable energy systems to existing irrigation schemes is a great example of the Tasmanian Government working with farmers to deliver water at a reduced cost, providing greater water surety to farmers.

Significant progress has been made towards the completion of all three components of the project. All three activities are in progress and on track to meet planned completion dates in early 2023 (high efficiency pumps), April 2023 (Meander hydro) and end 2023 (solar arrays).

FORTH PUMP REPLACEMENTS

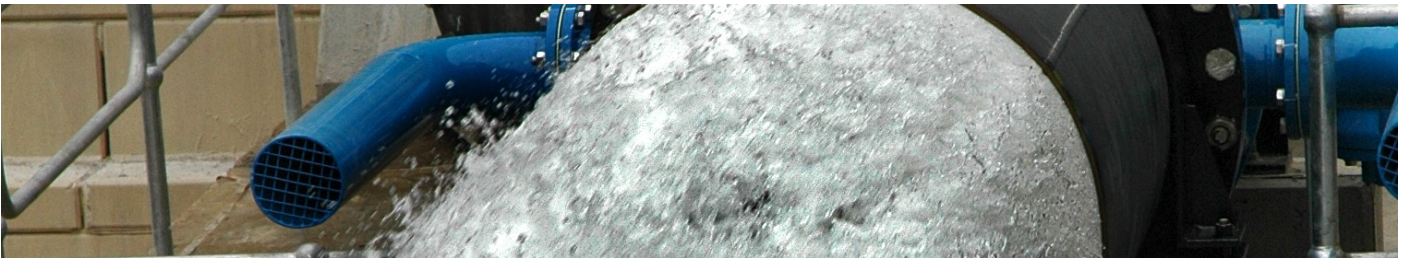
Tasmanian Irrigation late last year complete an upgrade of the Forth pumps on the Kindred North Motton Irrigation Scheme.



The old submersible pumps have been replaced by more reliable and energy efficient vertical turbine pumps, which are much easier to monitor and maintain.

The pumps have now been commissioned and integrated into the control system with some ongoing flow monitoring and fine tuning of pump outputs to be undertaken during the irrigation season.

The photo (above, right) shows the new pumps prior to the installation of pipework, acoustic enclosure and gantry and the second photo (to the left) shows the final product with all items installed.



WHAT'S AHEAD

Given the dry period currently being experienced around the majority of the State and the need for irrigation water to either finish crops or pre-emergent watering for recently established crops, Tasmanian Irrigation could see a call for water in March and April as we head into the cooler and dormant months.

This later demand may require schemes to remain open slightly longer than usual.

The Water Delivery team will continue delivering water until the season ends.

Once the season declaration is made, the operations team will be busy reading meters, reconciling water trades and ensuring all water harvested and delivered is accounted for, allowing the commercial / finance team to invoice water and the environment team to start collating the relevant data from the scheme operators to produce Water Entity reports and begin the auditing process of FWAP's (Farm Water access Plans).

The Scheme Operators, in conjunction with the asset maintenance division, will begin the off season maintenance programs set for each of the schemes.

Some schemes will enter a de-winterising program to ensure the schemes assets are protected from frosts and the harsh elements of winter.

In March and April, work will begin to provide the financial results, pricing and budget information for the forthcoming season to irrigators and a rolling period of Irrigator Representative Committee meetings will take place from May through to September.

This is one of the biggest annual programs that is rolled out each year and involves a majority of the departments within Tasmanian Irrigation to accumulate the information and then deliver it to irrigators in a transparent and straightforward method.

Please contact the Water Delivery team if you have any questions about our operations.

Irrigator Representative Committees

An insight into IRCs

Irrigator Representative Committees (IRCs) play a key role in the two-way communication between Tasmanian Irrigation and landowners – during the planning and construction of new irrigation projects, as well as once a scheme is operational.

The volunteer members represent all water entitlement holders to update Tasmanian Irrigation on local operational matters, including water delivery, supply issues, metering and water quality.

The committee provides a better understanding of the issues facing irrigators within the district and uses their local knowledge and on-farm experience to identify opportunities for system, service and delivery improvements.

The members also provide input and constructive feedback on water trading, procedures, pricing and billing arrangements, and declare any conflicts of interest which may have a perceived or actual impact on the scheme.

The members provide a point of contact for other entitlement holders in the irrigation scheme, including allowing contact details to be circulated for this purpose and provide guidance on demand profiles.

Tasmanian Irrigation thanks all voluntary IRC members across all operational schemes and new irrigation projects for their ongoing time, commitment, cooperation and communication.

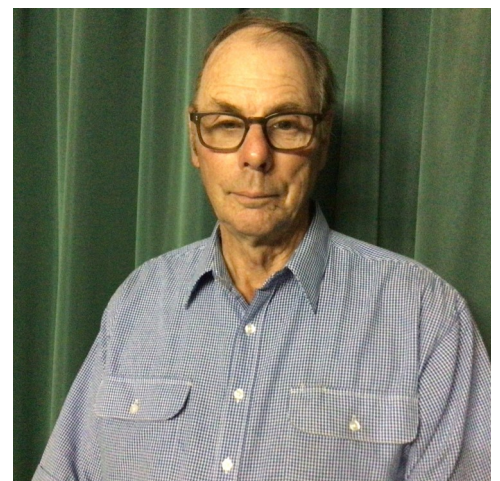


David Field, Duck IRC Chair

“The Duck Irrigation Scheme IRC is a vital link between Tasmanian Irrigation and our farmers. We are very appreciative of TI’s commitment to providing information for us to share with our irrigators, as well as the new format for the face to face meetings, which give us a more in-depth understanding of pricing, TI priorities, repairs and maintenance planned for the off season, and other operational matters.”

Charlie Watson, North Esk IRC Chair

“Communication between Tasmanian Irrigation and irrigators is essential. The IRC for the North Esk Irrigation Scheme has been in place since the scheme was first put on the table for development, and continues to play an important role in ensuring information flows two ways. I sincerely thank all IRC members for giving up their time and sharing their expertise as part of this Committee, as well as TI for continually improving the level of detail provided.”



Program Development and Delivery

By Josh Marshall and 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.

Tasmanian Irrigation is currently advancing work on five new irrigation projects, as well as two existing scheme augmentations and a dam upgrade.

Here is an update on some of the current projects:

Don Irrigation Scheme

- The pipeline contractor is making good progress and is on schedule to complete pipeline works prior to winter 2023;
- The pump station contractor is progressing well with pump station structures well underway and balance tanks complete;
- Property outlet fabrication completed and installations progressing; and
- Project remains on track to have water delivered in the 2023/24 irrigation season.

Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme

- EPBC referral under review with project team meeting national team in Canberra this week;
- Contractor engagement continues with industry days being held;
- Pipe manufacturing program under review with commencement to start in next month; and
- Land holder engagement for alignment with all irrigators and impacted farms commenced.

Sassafras Wesley Vale Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

- The project has entered the detailed design phase, with work underway to both secure the alignment and detail work at Great Bend Pump Station;
- The project has initiated Natural Values infield assessments, including the completion of Spring Surveys, Eagle Nest Detection, and progression of field walks in areas of NV significance;
- The process to accept applications for water is underway and completion expected prior to the first week of March; and
- The project Team is growing. John Wright has recently come on board to assist with the delivery of the project – taking up the role of Assistant Project Manager.

Greater Meander Irrigation Scheme Augmentation

- Tender for intake upgrade works at Quamby and Hagley issued;
- Pipeline alignment walk down and draft drawings produced;
- Capacity testing on Rubicon identified pump performance issue;
- Capacity testing a Hagley planned to confirm shoulder pipeline reach;
- Greater Meander Council reviewing planning submission;

Program Development and Delivery continued...

- Water Sales acceptance to irrigators on track for end March; and
- Landholder Access Agreements being negotiated.

Lake Leake Dam Upgrade

- Construction contract has been signed; and
- Early works have commenced.

Greater South East Irrigation Scheme

- Water sales completed with a strong response from the region. More than 350 applications were received;

- The project team is moving forward with the re-design process to determine the capacity and reach of the scheme;
- The target for business case submission is June 2023;
- Applicants can expect an update on their application status in April; and
- Business case funding anticipated in late 2023.

Tamar Irrigation Scheme

- Scheme remains under review to investigate options for a reduced scheme to service current demand;

- Options for further Water Sales to isolate areas underway;
- Continued work with RECFIT on the potential water supply to the renewables project and Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone;
- Noise assessments to pump stations locations;
- Alignment review for build-up areas and discussions with local councils underway;
- Construction review of high-risk areas;
- Legal and contractual assistance now working with TI executive; and
- EOI process for industrial demand to commence late Feb.

Construction Pictures from the Don Irrigation Scheme



Tracking Platypus

By Jesse Lewis, Tasmanian Irrigation Environmental Scientist



It's a misty morning along the Meander River just outside of Deloraine.

I'm on the lookout for an elusive creature that locals tell me lurks along the riverbank here.

Scanning the shoreline, I see people walking dogs, ducks cruising the main channel, a white-faced heron hunting stealthily amongst the reeds.

Still, my quarry eludes me. Until I see a subtle splash and bubbles floating to the surface.

Suddenly, I'm confronted by one of the most outlandish and iconic creatures in Australia - the platypus.

When platypus specimens were first introduced to the outside world, they were so strange scientists thought they were a hoax.

But in the animal kingdom the truth is often stranger than fiction. Platypuses are monotremes, an ancient lineage of transitional egg-laying mammals.

Sporting a rubbery duck bill, webbed feet and fur they are like nothing else. Known by various names by First Nations people, platypuses are well known to most all Australians. However, their numbers are in decline, and they are now at risk of becoming locally extinct in some areas.

To help, researchers are increasingly engaging farmers, landowners and local communities as citizen scientists — community members like my friend Anne Gilles.

Anne is a passionate advocate for all things platypus related and volunteers to guide visitors for evening platypus walks along the Meander River in Deloraine.

The walks are great fun, and an important opportunity not only to educate visitors and shine a light on these unique animals, but also to collect important observational data for science.

Today we are lucky enough to spot two platypuses, including what appears to be the dominant male of this part of the river, a large platypus we've jokingly named 'phatty platy'.

Observing the river's platypus population over time Anne gains rare insights into platypus ecology, which she shares with the greater community

through outlets such as the platy-project: a citizen science initiative to fill knowledge gaps in platypus distribution nationwide.

Tasmanian Irrigation regularly conducts water quality and ecological sampling on the river below Meander Dam as part of its environment and sustainability commitments.

So, the fact that the platypus population is robust and doing so well here is a positive sign.

Tasmanian Irrigation's implementation of Farm Water Access Plans (Farm WAPs) also ensures that platypus and other natural values on farms are looked out for during irrigation.

For instance, Farm WAPs incorporate biodiversity and ecosystem values on farms and best practice land management considerations to conserve them.

Platypus are found across a wide range of aquatic habitats in Tasmania ranging from rivers and streams to lakes and farm dams.

Many irrigators would be familiar with platypus on their properties and may have come across them in their own farm dams.



Images: Anne Gilles

For those wanting to help conserve these amazing animals there are several ways to make your property platypus friendly:

- Conserve and restore native vegetation around creeks, waterholes and dams to stabilise banks, improve water quality and increase food and habitat for platypus;
- Fence off riparian areas to limit stock access to waterways;
- If not necessary to remove, leave live vegetation and fallen wood in waterways to help promote habitat and food sources for platypus. In northern Tasmania this is also key habitat for endangered giant freshwater crayfish;
- Avoid creating major barriers to platypus movement where possible, for instance at outlets to farm dams;
- Avoid major earthworks near waterways



between December and April when adult female platypus and their young will be in breeding burrows;

- If you encounter an injured platypus or a platypus requires removal, call a qualified handler such as WIRES. Never attempt to remove yourself, males can 'sting' with a venomous hind spur that is extremely painful; and
- Finally, consider becoming a citizen scientist yourself! Sign up for the platy project at <https://www.acf.org.au/platy-project>



TASMANIAN IRRIGATION — MEET THE TEAM

David Skipper

Tasmanian Irrigation title: General Manager Water Delivery.

Snapshot of your work and study history: Since leaving school in the mid 80's, I have always been involved in agriculture or services to agriculture with the exception of a short stint in the late 2000's. I obtained a Bachelor of Ag Commerce from the University of New England (Orange NSW) and hold a graduate diploma in Accountancy from Adelaide University. I am not an accountant, and don't want to be one, I just wanted to understand how the numbers come together.

Brief description of your current role: I manage the operations division of the business with regional hub leaders who have oversight of a number of scheme operators on each scheme. I also manage the asset management and engineering services teams, or what is known internally as Technical Support Services. This division manages in excess of \$500 million of scheme assets and all of our 22 dams. We also have a world class engineering services team, which includes electrical, mechanical, hydrological services and our little known Geographic Information System (GIS). Our GIS is a system that creates, manages, analyses and maps all types of data.

What do you enjoy most about working at Tasmanian Irrigation: The diversity of work, the challenges that each day presents and working with very loyal and committed work colleagues, who are passionate about their role and how it entwines to delivering sustainable water to irrigators and for them to then utilise this water to produce world-class products. It's hard to describe the feeling and sense of fulfilment of seeing a locally produced product on

a shelf that was produced by one of our irrigators.

What has been your most memorable moment since joining TI: Being informed that Melrose Dam is full (after three years). Also hearing friends and visitors describe the revolution that irrigation has made to the State and how the transformation of Tasmanian agriculture has been in the last decade, and to have a tangible connection to the longevity, sustainability and uniqueness of Tassie agriculture.

Favourite book: I don't have a favourite book but recently enjoyed reading a gripping Swedish mystery, *Three Seconds* by Anders Roslund.

Favourite food: Very hard not to go past a superbly cooked tender porterhouse Steak and freekeh salad.

Favourite movie: The Blues Brothers.

Favourite holiday location: Anywhere where there is great surf, sand beaches, abundant fishing and plenty of sun. Oh and any of the Greek islands isn't too bad either!

Best piece of advice for the next generation: We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak. Be self-aware and vulnerable.

If I was Prime Minister for a day, I would: Immediately resign with the full PM pension.

The three people you would invite to share dinner with you: Warren Buffet, Roy and HG.

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:

March 2023

Energy on Farms Solar Project Construction Commences

Mid 2023

Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme Tenders Open
Greater Meander Augmentation Successful Tenderer Announced



Tasmanian Irrigation

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