

# Irrigation farm reconfiguration, water savings and revegetation near Barmah



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Staff from the Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) Sustainable Irrigated Landscapes team and Ecosystem Services team, in collaboration with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA), through one of its Drought Employment Program crews, recently joined forces with a new partner, Water for Rivers. Together, the three groups have completed projects providing multiple benefits across land, water and biodiversity.

One project involved significant farm reconfiguration and rationalisation on a 4,410 hectare property near Barmah. The property was purchased by Water for Rivers and converted from growing rice to irrigated winter cropping with the aim of improving agricultural and environmental sustainability. A component of the farm reconfiguration was to enhance environmental assets and value by fencing remnant vegetation and revegetating key areas of the farm. Benefits of these works include: improved shelter belts for stock, lowering the water table, and improving biodiversity.

Valuable environmental features and areas, where enhanced ecosystem services could be provided, were identified by Department of Primary Industries and "Water for Rivers" staff. Seven priority sites were chosen to be included in an incentive agreement, including three sites that were fenced by the Goulburn Broken CMA's Drought Employment Program team to protect remnant vegetation.

Water for Rivers is a joint government enterprise incorporated as a public company and its goal is to save 282 gigalitres of water by 2012. Water savings made through property and infrastructure reconfiguration activities funded by Water for Rivers are used to enhance environmental flows, primarily in the Snowy River, and the River Murray.

One of the areas targeted by the Drought Employment Crew was for works along the Walhalla Creek. This site was fenced off and in August 2009 it was direct seeded to enhance understorey species. Eleven hectares was revegetated with 33 kilometres of direct seeding lines.

The successful outcome of this project can be attributed to the new partnership with Water for Rivers, involving a high level of collaboration to meet multiple objectives. The farm redevelopment has resulted in improved water-use efficiency, better land use and increased biodiversity values.

Projects such as these contribute to achieving the Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy target to increase the cover of all endangered and vulnerable Ecological Vegetation Classes to at least 15% of their pre-European vegetation cover by 2030.

The Goulburn Broken CMA and the DPI supported the project through the Drought Employment Program and through the provision of advice and financial assistance via the Environment and Tree Growing incentive projects.

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