



Water flows freely thanks to upgrade

Dairy farmer Vin Warnock found himself faced with a bit of a conundrum.

His 42ha Goomalibee property had a 188ML diversion from the Broken River but the irrigation delivery system was old and inefficient.

“I had water but I wasn’t really able to use it,” Mr Warnock said. “I was looking to do something about it so when I heard there was money available for irrigation upgrades I thought ‘wow’.”

The Australian Government’s \$300 million On Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program (OFIEP) helps irrigators in the southern connected system of the Murray Darling Basin to modernise their on-farm irrigation infrastructure while returning at least 50 per cent of the water savings to the environment.

A consortium of Goulburn Murray Irrigation District organisations, led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, secured \$21 million (GST exclusive) from the first round of the OFIEP to fund 76 projects.

Mr Warnock’s project, made possible by the Australian Government funding, involved laser-grading, automation and installation of about 400m of pipe and risers on a 14.1ha section of his property.

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At a glance

Who: Vin Warnock

Where: Broken River diversion licence, Goomalibee

What: 14.1ha – laser grading, automation and installation of pipe and risers

Water savings: 54ML – 27ML transferred to the Australian Government for environmental purposes.

The work saved 54ML of water, with 27ML returned to the Australian Government for environmental use.

Mr Warnock has reconfigured eight 50m-wide bays into seven and expects flows to be about 13ML a day.

“Because the outlets from the old fibro-cement pipes were too small they were really restricting water flow,” he said.

“I had to divide it (the flow) on to three bays at a time – it was taking about 20 hours to water a bay – it was extremely inefficient,” he said.

Since the efficiency upgrade he has planted the area with rye and clover, which he plans to use for silage to feed the 180-cow herd he and wife Johanne run at their Swanpool property, and as pasture for the 50 heifers on their Goomalibee farm.

Mr Warnock said as well improving watering efficiency, automation of the system will save him time and money as he will now have to make the 40-minute trip between the two properties less often.

“After years of drought and poor milk prices it’s been a bit tight (financially). Things are turning around but they’re turning around very slowly,” he said. “This funding has allowed me to carry out work now that I probably couldn’t have afforded to do at this time otherwise.”

For more information about the OFIEP visit www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/srwui/irrigation-efficiency
