



## Irrigation upgrades improve property value

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Stanhope dairy farmer Graeme Nurse is adamant that upgrading his farm irrigation system has doubled the value of his dairy property.

“It was badly set up and very hard to irrigate,” Mr Nurse said.

“We’ve gone from more than 100 bays to about 35 and use one outlet rather than three; instead of taking days to irrigate it takes hours.

“There’s no doubt we’re more efficient - we’re using less water and saving time and labour.

“The work has definitely at least doubled the value of the property – it’s so much easier to run.”

Mr Nurse successfully applied for funding from Round 1 of the Farm Water Program to upgrade 40.6ha of his 323ha property.

A consortium of Northern Victorian organisations, led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, secured \$16 million from NVIRP (now part of G-MW) to fund 75 projects in Round 1 of the Farm Water Program.

The program helps irrigators in the southern connected system of the Murray Darling Basin to modernise their on-farm irrigation infrastructure while transferring at least half the water savings to the environment.

Mr Nurse said he found out about the Farm Water Program through NVIRP while discussing taking over a nearby G-MW channel.

“NVIRP staff suggested applying for on-farm funding because they thought it would work well with the (irrigation delivery system modernisation) works and while it was a bit of a hassle, I’m very glad that I went ahead with it and applied,” he said.

“The work needed to be done and would have taken me at least 10 to 12 years to do otherwise.”

The upgrade took almost eight months and involved clearing all existing fences, laneways and troughs.

A G-MW channel that cut the farm almost in half was removed, lasering carried out, new bays constructed and outlets installed.

### At a glance

**Who:** Graeme Nurse

**Where:** Goulburn System, Stanhope

**What:** 40.6ha – lasering, fast flow

**Water savings:** 102ML – 51ML of the water recovered from this project will contribute to water that Victoria returns to the environment.

“Cleaning up after all that work was also a pretty big job, too,” Mr Nurse said.

Mr Nurse started using the upgraded system in January.

“It’s all still a bit new but we’re definitely using less water,” he said.

“It used to take three or four days at six to eight megs a day to irrigate. Now it takes about 12 to 16 hours using an average of about 14 megs a day.”

Mr Nurse said he was moving from growing sub and some permanent pasture on the property’s medium soils to growing mostly lucerne with some permanent pasture.

The works saved 102 megalitres of water with 51 megalitres transferred to the State Government for environmental purposes.

“We’re losing less through evaporation and the water is going where it needs to go,” he said.

“Instead of spending five days a fortnight irrigating it takes about a day which frees you up from being tied to the farm all the time.”

Mr Nurse said he was now feeling far more optimistic about the future of farming.

“Like everyone we’d been doing it tough after the drought but this (infrastructure upgrade) has given us a second wind,” he said.

“It’s also good for the local economy – I know the local bloke that makes the stops has put on extra people because of the work this (the Farm Water Program) is generating.

“Investment in on-farm infrastructure is the way to go rather than buying up farms and water.

“It makes sense to help the farmers use their water more efficiently.”

For more information about the Farm Water Program visit [www.gbcma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gbcma.vic.gov.au)