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On farm works save time and labour

Dairy farmer Harry Rowlands is watering more often but it takes less time thanks to the extensive pipe and riser system he installed on his Gunbower farm last year.

He successfully applied for funding from Round 1 of the Farm Water Program to install 3.5km of pipe and 50 risers on 85ha of the family's 113ha main farm property.

The Farm Water Program helps irrigators in the southern connected system of the Murray Darling Basin to modernise their on-farm irrigation infrastructure while returning water savings to the environment.

A consortium of Goulburn Murray Irrigation District organisations, led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, secured \$16 million from NVIRP to fund 75 projects in Round 1.

Mr Rowlands has also upgraded his re-use pump, pump shed and installed another pump.

"The pumps are on timers so there's no more getting up at all hours to turn them on and off," he said.

At a glance

Who: Harry Rowlands

Where: Torrumbarry Irrigation Area, Gunbower

What: 85 ha – installation of pipe and riser system and pump and motor to service pipe and riser system

Water savings: 240ML – 124ML of the water recovered from this project will contribute to water that Victoria returns to the environment.

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About 20ML of water is now delivered through each riser, significantly more than the 12ML delivered via the old channel system.

“Because the pumps are self-priming it’s so much easier – just a press of a button - and by the time I get back over to the paddock the water’s flowing. It used to take up to six hours to get water to some paddocks now it’s about 30 seconds.”

Mr Rowlands laid his pipes in existing channels and chose to create a loop-line system. The loop-line system not only saved him money because he could use smaller pipes it has meant that the water flows at a more consistent rate from every riser.

“Even in the higher paddocks, which used to take a lot longer to water, the water flow is the same as the other areas,” he said. “There’s less water lying around, I’m watering faster and the pasture is growing better so there’s a lot more feed. And without channels there’s now no more spraying and having to run around dealing with cracks and leaks and blocks.”

Mr Rowlands said while water savings were a consideration when he applied for the program the main attraction was improved efficiency.

“The real win is the amount of my time and labour that’s saved,” Mr Rowlands said..

“It was also an opportunity to carry out work I probably could never have afforded to otherwise. Work that would have taken me 20 years to get done has instead taken two months.”

To date, more than \$100 million has been secured through the Farm Water Program for the region’s irrigators.

“The program has been a real boon for area,” Mr Rowlands said. “The local pump supplier’s been run off his feet and the excavator operator’s put on someone else. It’s good for everyone.”

For more information about the Farm Water Program visit www.gbcma.vic.gov.au
