



February 2013

On-farm works improve small farm management

Shayne Eeles says he's "rapt" with the results of the on-farm work undertaken through Round 1 of the Farm Water Program on his 30ha Rochester standard-bred horse breeding and training property.

Mr Eeles received funding to install a pipe and riser system, a pump and automation on a 9.8ha of his property and for lasering and installation of pipe and risers on another 15.7ha section. The work saved 67.5ML of water.

At a glance

Who: Shayne Eeles

Where: Rochester, Campaspe system

What: Lasering, installation of pipe and risers

Water saved: 67.5ML; 33.8ML transferred for environmental purposes

"It has made it far easier to water and manage a small farm, I'm really rapt," Mr Eeles said.

The project was one of 75 funded after \$16 million was secured from NVIRP (now the Goulburn-Murray Water Connections Program) in Round 1 of the Farm Water Program.

The Farm Water Program is consortium of Northern Victorian organisations, led by the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (CMA), which helps irrigators in the southern connected system of the Murray Darling Basin to modernise their on-farm irrigation infrastructure.

Half the resulting water savings are transferred to the environment.

Mr Eeles grows lucerne and pasture used to feed the 15 horses and a small herd of beef cattle he runs on the property, with the remainder supplied to the horse industry.

After two seasons of using the new system he has already noticed significant water, time and labour savings as well as increased production.

"The (smaller 9.8ha) area was already laid out well but it was good to get rid of the channels – there is now far less time needed on maintenance and, because the water is now pretty much on tap, it's easier to manage," he said.

Previously, Mr Eeles had to irrigate the whole area at once to "make it worthwhile".

"It would take a couple of days and there were always issues around where to put stock," he said.

“Now I can water a couple of bays at a time – I can be more targeted – and it’s all easier to manage.”

Lasering of the larger (15.7ha) area has allowed Mr Eeles to reduce the number of paddocks from 24 to 14, and allowed him to get rid of fences making more productive land available. The property has also been connected to the water delivery backbone through the G-MW Connections Program, which with the on-farm works, means Mr Eeles now has a reliable and consistent water flow.

“In this section I’d maybe get three to four megalitres now it’s about nine or 10 and the same rate on all paddocks,” he said.

“I used to have to wait for hours to get the water on, but now I’m confident it will come on where and when I want it to, it’s on and off faster and that has improved production.”

Mr Eeles said he would consider applying for future funding through the program to upgrade another 40ha section of the farm.

“I probably never would have done this and spent the money without the Farm Water Program,” he said.

“The work took a bit over 12 months to complete, but it was always going to be a long-term project. It was all a bit hectic in the first weeks to get the project over the line - sorting out quotes and that sort of thing - and then to work out the logistics of the works, but it’s been smooth sailing since the work was finished.”

Mr Eeles, who also owns Campaspe Fencing, said the program had broader regional benefits.

“You can definitely see that the on-farm efficiency program has been great for the local community - contractors are flat out and that’s good for local businesses.”