



FarmWater

Program good for the whole irrigation industry

IRRIGATORS have been the obvious benefactors from the Farm Water Program, led by the Goulburn Broken CMA, but there's also been a positive flow-on effect for related industries.

Onleys, which specialises in survey and irrigation design, is an example of an off-farm, regional business which has grown on the back of the Farm Water Program (FWP).

Owner Tony Onley said a significant proportion of his company's work was built around the design of whole farm plans, many of which were undertaken due to their requirement for the FWP.

"A third of our business is based on whole farm plans as well as irrigation and drainage design for improving irrigation methods," Mr Onley said.

He said he hired several designers and other staff members to accommodate the requirements of the program.

"From an employment perspective there has been a boost and the funds have stayed in the region.

"Whether its Padman Stops, Rob Rye Irrigation Piping or Hogan Excavations, the program has certainly been great for local industries associated with irrigation," he said.

Mr Onley said the program was like manna from heaven for irrigation-related businesses when it was launched in 2010.

"Going back four or five years, it was a fairly sad sort of scenario because a lot of the area was in drought, so when the program was introduced it was great for suppliers and contractors around the area."

He said the program's investment was now bearing fruit right across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

"You can drive around the district and see where people have upgraded their systems.

"It's brought forward a lot of work and improved the irrigation practices of a lot of people who've participated in it."



Mr Onley said separate to the spin-off benefits for his business, he was a supporter of the program's ideals. "It has great merit, especially when done in conjunction with Goulburn Murray Water's connections project. "The trade-off has been the water loss from the region but it has certainly accelerated upgrades on farms. There's no doubt about that.

If there was a way it could continue and didn't require the relinquishment of water, then that would be the ultimate because it allows for the improvement of the farms while still maintaining the water."

The Farm Water Program, delivered by a consortium led by the Goulburn Broken CMA, has now funded over 600 individual irrigator projects worth over \$160 million over five rounds.