

## Healthy HeadWaters Water Use Efficiency Project

### Help to fund works that save water

Financial assistance is now available to eligible irrigators in Queensland Murray–Darling Basin catchments to improve the efficiency of water use on their properties.

This is the first phase of the \$115 million Healthy HeadWaters Water Use Efficiency Project, which commits to irrigation planning and on-farm infrastructure in the Queensland section of the Murray–Darling Basin.

The Australian Government is providing up to \$36 million for the Queensland Government to undertake two rounds of on-farm irrigation efficiency improvements that will help both irrigation communities and the environment.

These irrigation infrastructure works will be supported by a detailed basin appraisal study which will help to identify potential water savings and how the project will socially and economically assist irrigation communities.

The project will help irrigators invest in more efficient irrigation systems and technologies that reduce water loss, deliver long-term economic benefits, and return a share of water savings to the basin's rivers, wetlands and floodplains.

The project is being managed by Queensland's Department of Environment and Resource Management (the department).

### Eligibility

Tradeable surface water allocation holders in the Condamine–Balonne and Border Rivers catchments are eligible to apply in the first round of the project.

### How the water use efficiency project works

Interested irrigators who hold supplemented or unsupplemented surface water entitlement may submit a proposal for upgrading water use efficiency on their property, identifying the cost of the proposals, benefits to their production and the water savings that can be achieved.

After the application period closes, the proposals will be assessed and ranked according to a set of criteria, including economic, social, environmental, technical and value for money, by the department and the Australian Government.

The type of work proposed is up to the landholder, depending on what suits their property and situation.

Potential work could include improvements to water storages, farm distribution or in-field irrigation systems.

Successful applicants need to sign an agreement with the department covering the infrastructure work as well as signing an agreement with the Australian Government to permanently transfer 50 per cent of the water savings achieved as a result of the infrastructure upgrades.

Infrastructure work agreed to in the first round must be completed by June 2012.

### When and how to apply

The department plans to hold two application rounds in the first phase of the project. The first round application period is from 1 June 2010. Applications must be lodged with the department by 30 September 2010.

An information guide, application form and other supporting information are available on the department's website at <[www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)> or by contacting the department on telephone 4688 1185 or by email at: <[hwwue@derm.qld.gov.au](mailto:hwwue@derm.qld.gov.au)>.

The second round of applications will be called for in early 2011.

After the two rounds of funding for the first phase of the scheme are complete, the department and the Australian Government will assess the results before a second phase of the project is confirmed.

### Assistance with planning

The department recognises that while some irrigators may analyse their own water use and develop a savings proposal, others may want expert assistance to assess whether the project is suitable for them.

Therefore, assistance of up to \$1500 will be available to irrigators to engage a consultant. The consultant can help irrigators assess their current system performance, provide advice on options and provide assistance in developing their proposal.

In addition, the department will contract specialist staff to work within the specified catchments, providing free general irrigation information and advice to all irrigators.

### Queensland's role in the Murray–Darling Basin

Queensland is working with the Australian Government and other states to secure a sustainable future for the Murray–Darling Basin.

The Queensland Government is a party to the 2008 agreement on Murray–Darling Basin reform that establishes new governance arrangements for the Murray–Darling Basin. At the same time, the Australian



Government agreed in principle to fund priority water-saving projects in Murray–Darling Basin states, under the Water for the Future initiative.

For this reason, the program was developed with a Murray–Darling Basin focus, as a way of improving the health of the Queensland headwaters of this system.

Queensland's Healthy HeadWaters program aims to:

- help Queensland's Murray–Darling Basin irrigation communities deal with climate change and reduced consumptive water use
- help Queensland's Murray–Darling Basin irrigation communities maintain their water dependent economic vibrancy
- ensure the long-term viability of ecological assets by making more water available for the environment.

Another project under the Healthy HeadWaters program is focusing on the potential for using coal seam gas water in the Queensland Murray–Darling Basin.

The Coal Seam Gas Water Feasibility Study will analyse the opportunities for, and the risks and practicability of, using coal seam gas water to assist in achieving the long-term goals in the Queensland Murray–Darling Basin of transitioning irrigation communities to lower water use and securing the viability of ecological assets.

## Further information

For information about the Australian Government's Water for the Future initiative, visit the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website at <[www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/water-for-the-future](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/water-for-the-future)>.

For more information about the Murray–Darling Basin Authority's Basin Plan process, visit the Murray–Darling Basin Authority's website at <[www.mdba.gov.au](http://www.mdba.gov.au)>.

For more information about the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's work, visit the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website at <[www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/cewh](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/policy-programs/cewh)>.

For information about the Queensland Government's coal seam gas feasibility study, visit the department's website at <[www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)>.

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For general enquiries contact the  
Queensland Government call centre 13 13 04  
or visit [www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)