

# Northern Victoria Irrigation Development Guidelines

AGRICULTURE VICTORIA

## FACT SHEET 1 - Overview of the process and requirements for new irrigation developments

*This fact sheet outlines the Northern Victorian Irrigation Development Guidelines, 2020 (the Guidelines) and provides an overview of the process.*

### PART ONE: WHERE TO START

All developers of new irrigation developments (and significant re-developments) within the Goulburn Murray Water region of Northern Victoria must comply with the Guidelines.

#### Contact an Irrigation Development Coordinator

Agriculture Victoria employs Irrigation Development Coordinators (IDCs) in Northern Victoria to provide information about the Guidelines and to guide developers through the approvals process.

The IDC service is provided at no charge and can save developers considerable time and resources.

#### Complete an Irrigation Development Application Form

To commence the approval process, developers must obtain an Irrigation Development Application Form from the relevant IDC and return the completed form to the IDC.

The completed Irrigation Development Application Form provides the basis for preliminary assessments. The IDC will undertake a desktop analysis to examine readily known issues which may prevent the development from going ahead and/or have a large impact upon the viability of the development. A site visit may be required to clarify development issues that may require further investigation.

#### IDC contacts:

Echuca (west of the Goulburn River to Nyah)

- Kathy Long, Agriculture Victoria, PO Box 441, Echuca, Vic. 3564, [kathy.long@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:kathy.long@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

Rutherglen (east of the Goulburn River and the North East.

- Dennis Watson, Agriculture Victoria, 124 Chiltern Valley Road, Rutherglen, Vic 3685, [dennis.watson@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:dennis.watson@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

### PART TWO: WHAT TO SORT OUT

Developers are urged to contact an IDC as early as possible to discuss their proposed irrigation development activity. A preliminary discussion with an IDC will provide the developer with a thorough understanding of the potential complexity of the assessment process, the information needed to be collected, the costs involved and any issues which may impact on the time required to gain approvals and/or impact on the project cost structure.

#### 1. Licences, permits and delivery shares.

After the preliminary discussion with the IDC, and if proceeding with the approvals process, the developer will have a clear picture of the licences and permits they require. The two key licences are a 'works licence' and 'water-use licence'. In the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) developers may also require delivery share.

##### 1.1 Delivery share

For developers planning irrigation developments or redevelopments on properties supplied from the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID), water delivery shares are required. This ensures that there is enough capacity in the channels and pipelines to deliver water to the property in a timely manner. Delivery shares are tied to land and may come with the property purchase. They can be purchased from existing irrigators with spare delivery shares or issued from Goulburn Murray Water.

For more information on delivery shares please contact GMW.

##### 1.2 Works licence

A works licence is required to construct and operate water delivery infrastructure (pumps and pipelines) across Crown Land to deliver water to the property boundary. A works licence will not be issued in isolation from the water-use licence or take and use licence. The two licences are interdependent.

Private diverters, (those proposing to irrigate outside the GMID) will need to follow the approvals process for the associated works licence. It is recommended that this process is pursued in parallel with the approvals process for the water-use licence or take and use licence.



Refer to the fact sheet Applying for a Works Licence.

- Storage dams

If a storage dam is required to be constructed on-farm, the approval for these works is required under a works licence (not the water-use licence).

Please contact GMW regarding works licences.

### 1.3 Water-use licence and take and use licences

The proposed developer must have either a 'water-use licence' or a 'take and use licence'<sup>1</sup> to enable water to be applied to land for the purpose of growing crops. GMW are responsible for issuing these licences. One of the conditions in granting either type of licence is whether the proposed water use is consistent with the water-use objectives of the Victorian Water Act 1989.

- Water-use objectives

Water-use objectives (Victorian Water Act 1989) are aimed at minimising the impacts of water use on other persons and the environment.

These include:

- Managing groundwater infiltration
- Managing drainage disposal
- Minimising salinity
- Protecting biodiversity
- Minimising the cumulative impacts of water use.

The Victorian Water Register has more detail on [water-use objectives](#).

The other conditions applied to water-use licences (and to take and use licences) are annual use limits, and standard water-use conditions.

Water-use licences or take and use licences are issued from the relevant Water Corporation for a specified land parcel. Developers can apply for a water-use licence or a take and use licence by [completing Form 23](#) and submitting it to the appropriate Water Corporation.

In considering the water-use licence application, the Water Corporation must have regard to issues relevant to the associated works licence application. A water-use licence will not be issued in isolation from a works licence.

Annual use limits are a standard condition attached to all water-use licences and may also apply to take and use licences, which will also have a licenced volume that is the maximum annual application rate.

- Annual Use Limits and Standard Water-use conditions

There is a maximum amount of water that can be applied to land in a 12-month period from 1 July to 30 June. These amounts are known as annual use limits. They are specified on the water-use licence as a condition of use. Annual use limits are dependent on crop type, are based on a set of maximum application rates and are measured in megalitres (ML) per hectare per year.

Schedule 2 of the Ministerial Determination on Standard Water Use Conditions lists [maximum application rates](#).

The IDC can also provide information about maximum application rates for a range of other crops.



### 1.4 Licence assessment process summary

The approvals process for the issue of a new licence, (or for expansion/intensification of irrigation requiring a change to an existing water-use licence), may involve any or all of the assessments listed below:

- Irrigation and Drainage Plan (IDP)
- Flora and fauna assessment
- Environmental risk assessment
- Aboriginal cultural heritage requirements.

Not all of these may be required. It depends on the risks involved at the site, and the complexity of the issues.

#### 1.4.1 Irrigation and Drainage Plan

An application for a new water-use or take and use licence or a major variation to an existing licence must be accompanied by an Irrigation and Drainage Plan (IDP). The key purpose of an Irrigation and Drainage Plan (IDP) is to match the way land is irrigated and drainage disposed of, with the characteristics of the land and soil, to meet the objective of minimising harmful side-effects. The standards are described in Schedule 1 of Ministerial Determination for [Standard Water Use Conditions](#).

*A take and use licence applies to either a fixed term or ongoing entitlement to take and use water from an undeclared waterway, catchment dam, spring, soak or aquifer (e.g. Coliban Rural, unregulated streams, groundwater). Each licence has conditions set by the Minister for Water which are specified on the licence.*

<sup>1</sup> A water-use licence authorises the use of water from declared regulated surface sources (e.g. from Murray, Goulburn, Loddon, Campaspe, Broken Rivers) for the purposes of irrigation on the land specified in that licence.

The Irrigation and Drainage Plan consists of:

- a. A map of the proposed development
- b. Soil assessment - soil profile survey depending on the proposed irrigation system
- c. Irrigation design and management
- d. Arrangements for drainage disposal
- e. Biodiversity protection arrangements

On approval by GMW, the Irrigation and Drainage Plan becomes a condition of the water-use licence or take and use licence and provides details of what must be done to demonstrate that the additional water use has minimal impact on the environment.

There are certain situations where Irrigation and Drainage Plans are not required or are not required in full. Further advice should be sought from the IDC and in the Irrigation and Drainage Plan fact sheet.

#### 1.4.2 Flora and Fauna Assessment

Where the presence of stands of native vegetation, and/or the presence of threatened species, has been identified a formal flora and fauna assessment and a native vegetation management plan may be required.

These must be undertaken by suitably qualified professionals and will inform the biodiversity protection arrangements of the Irrigation and Drainage Plan.

Refer to fact sheet: Impacts to Native Vegetation.



#### 1.4.3 Environmental Assessment

In cases where the proposed water-use licence poses direct and ongoing risks to wetlands, native vegetation, or the habitat of native animals, the Irrigation and Drainage Plan must specify suitable monitoring and preventative arrangements, recording/auditing requirements, and specify corrective action as appropriate.

The monitoring arrangements may include the need for groundwater monitoring bores, which must be built and maintained at standards specified by GMW.

For developments where the environmental risks are deemed by GMW to be very high, a hydrogeological, water quality, or other risk assessment will be required. These are completed by a qualified expert and are usually desktop studies based on existing information. Field investigations may be required if insufficient information exists.

This report guides the establishment of buffers adjacent to stands of native vegetation where deemed needed.

Refer to the fact sheet 'Buffer standards'

#### 1.4.4 Aboriginal cultural heritage

Irrigation development proposals may involve cultural heritage issues. Developers must adhere to relevant cultural heritage legislation. The Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (the Act), and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018, provide for the protection and management of Victoria's Aboriginal heritage (e.g. Aboriginal places, objects and human remains etc.) from irrigation development activities on private and public land.

All approval agencies/decision makers are responsible for ensuring that the developer is complying with the Act. This usually means having an approved cultural heritage management plan (CHMP).

More information is available from the Fact Sheet: Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

## 2. Planning permits

### 2.1 Native vegetation removal

A planning permit is required from the relevant local council for any works within the Public Conservation and Resource Zone, and to remove, lop or destroy native vegetation on all land. Avoidance of impacts on native vegetation should be the first approach.

Please refer to the appropriate local council for information on how to apply for a planning permit. Cultural heritage and other issues will be considered in the planning application stage. The planning permit may be referred to the Department of Environment Land Water and Planning for further assessment.

### 2.2 Earthworks permit

In some municipal areas, including Moira Shire, City of Greater Shepparton, and Campaspe Shire, proposed earthworks may require a permit. Check with your local council for more information.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The IDC can provide an information kit containing related fact sheets:

- Irrigation and drainage plan
- Protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage
- Native vegetation protection
- Buffer standards
- Applying for a works licence
- Public land managers consent application
- Siting and design guidelines
- Roles and responsibilities

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## ACCESSIBILITY

If you would like to receive this publication in an accessible format, please telephone Kathy Long on 03 54821922 or email [irrigation@agriculture.vic.gov.au](mailto:irrigation@agriculture.vic.gov.au)

If you are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment contact the [National Relay Service](#) on **133 677**

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