

Irrigator Chair meeting

Monday 21st August 2018

10am- Launceston Airport Boardroom

Present: Nicola Morris, Andrew Kneebone, Mike O'Shea, Neil Armstrong, Stuart Greenhill, Charlie Watson, Mike Cresswell, Ben Grubb, Richard Hallett, Andrew McShane, Anthony Bayley

Apol: Mike Buckby, Tim Lyne, Ken Lawrence, Justin Nicholas, Stan Cox, Damien Carpenter, Robert Dent

Update on Questions and Issues from 2017 IRCC meeting

Communication

- New website up and running

Will be publishing information on this and encouraging people to look there, people can look into other scheme info if they want

People

- New Board member – Chris Thompson

Self-Management

- DBIS in dialogue with DPIPWE
- Future proofing- looking at flexibility for future proofing

Key Projects

- Onewater implemented and being fine tuned
- Meter reading – Web apps being trialled that email usage/warnings
- By- laws now in place – new scheme by laws will be implemented as the scheme opens
- WAPS occurring

Other Questions

Flexibility of extending Irrigation seasons- this has been implemented in certain circumstances.

Extra water harvesting- looking at negotiating short term licences with DPIPWE

Question – what is happening with the clean out of Meander Intakes.

Answ: number of options are being investigated- it is a question of cost.

Communications

Irrigator Committee Meetings

- Try to get agendas out 1 week prior to meeting
- Minutes will be loaded onto website

All scheme budgets will be available on the website

Let your Operator or TI know if you want information loaded onto the website.

TI should not rely on Irrigator committee to disseminate information.

Chairs do not have a list of Emails for their Irrigators – so difficult for them to send out information

Action: TI to provide Irrigator Committee with email list for each scheme

TI to investigate an automated email system for Website to let irrigators know when new documents relevant to their scheme have been uploaded.

Chair would like an email to be send with document to each Irrigator and then up to them if they want to read.

People

TI Board

consists of:

Sam Hogg- Chair

John Whittington

Michael Chilvers

Guy Kingwill

Chris Thompson

Conflicts of interest- TI is confident that it can manage any conflicts efficiently

Chairs were very appreciative of the opportunity to meet with the TI Board and would be keen to see this continue.

TI Structure and Staffing

Andrew Kneebone has been around and met all Irrigator Chairs

Mike will be finishing at the end of September

There are 2 new scheme operators – Duck and GFIS/URIS

TI looking at operators servicing an area rather than just a scheme

Also looking at sharing services – possibly Taswater employees – what are the risks of outsourcing?

Important to have right coverage at the right times.

Automation – adding control systems – issue is they can be temperamental

What is the ability to call on committee in certain circumstances – if they have the skills to assist?

Important for committee to let operators know of people with skills in the area.

Season Performance

Question – could 100% entitlements be delivered

Ans- yes

Question- If exceed budget for year- is there a profit

Ans- no – there is no margin built in

Question- Is there a plan to get a profit from the water

Ans- There has been no talk from the government that they are looking for a dividend from TI

Modelling is underway to try and find out the economic benefits the schemes have given the state

Pricing

Fixed prices finalised – should be sent out in next few weeks

Variable pricing

Final TasNetworks negotiations

- pricing will be up 1-2%

- Power rebate will apply

Taswater

- CPI or close

Hydro

- Pricing between -5 to +4.2% (excluding Midlands)
- Negotiations re Midlands are ongoing

A paper will go to the Minister to look at how Irrigation water is costed from Hydro.

Power Generation

SWIS – verbal commitment with TasNetworks

- Paper work to be finalised
- Will be completed this year

Action- Email to be sent to Lance to follow up

Timing of Pricing

- To be approved by Board
- Out to committees
- Schedule meetings with Irrigators

Working with Hydro to negotiate a TI specific rate which would have to be contracted through aurora.

Question – Is small business energy rebate available for Irrigators individually?

Answer – Anna will send through details

Invoice timing- fixed invoices to be sent out at start of season (October) with payment due Jan-Feb

Projects

Duck

- on track for December supply

- dam almost finished

NEIS

- Evandale with Dam at Dalness
- question asked regarding new development and the conditions for water use.

Scottsdale

- started clearing access roads and dam site
- anticipated end of next year completion

SHIS

- out of defects
- addressing problems – looking at learnings for new schemes

Tranche 3

- 2 people working on
- 10 schemes identified
- Funding submitted to Infrastructure Australia via Tas Government.
- \$1.8 grant from Federal Government to investigate Future Irrigation project.
- 289 expressions of interest received for 67,000ML
- Looking at Water Infrastructure Loan fund to finance water sales – low interest loans
- Water sales within 12 months to 2 years
- Business case March/April

Zone Flow trials – costs

- Trials on a scheme to see what works and what doesn't

Mini Hydro project

- Business case with Treasury
- Money over 3 years
- Mini hydros and in-line power on existing infrastructure.
- July-Sept next year
- Profits and costs sit outside the scheme
Concern taking pressure from farmers – existing pressure will be protected.
- Possible use of environmental releases
- Tenders for investigation to go out in next 3-4 weeks

- Board will be gatekeeper for non-viable options

Winter Water

- Formalise pricing rationale
- Formalise process for accessing through:
 - o Contracts (Irrigation Rights)
 - o General Availability
- ACTION: TI to prepare pricing as part of overall pricing for 18/19

On Farm Energy and Irrigation Audit Program

https://www.stategrowth.tas.gov.au/business/sectors/food_and_agriculture/on-farm_program

The On-farm Energy and Irrigation Audit Program provides a subsidy to assist farmers engage a qualified professional to review their farm energy use and infrastructure and systems, and to identify savings strategies. This may include advice on pumping and efficient irrigation systems, general farm operations, solar, domestic usage, and farm machinery and equipment, which could potentially save thousands of dollars each year in energy charges.

Program funding of \$750 000 is available over three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21 with applications to remain open until the allocation for each financial year is fully committed.

Successful applicants will receive grant funding at a ratio of 2:1 such that for every \$2 provided, the recipient must contribute at least \$1.

Access to Pre and Post Season Water

- Dam fill strategy has to be taken into consideration to ensure 95% reliability
- Options suggested:
 - o Reduced take to match volume in storage
 - o Volume taken to come off annual entitlement
- Flexibility to match demand
- ACTION: TI to look at mechanisms to allow for greater flexibility for delivery to match demand

Self-Management

- Engagement with DPIPWE/TI/Scheme
- Some questions to be answered:
 - o Compliance obligations and responsibilities?
 - o Asset ownership?
 - o Dam Safety?
- TI will support an open and transparent approach to engagement with irrigators seeking to explore self-Management

