

Irrigation schemes open cash-flow tap

ONE of Tasmania's biggest infrastructure programs is happening right below our feet. With \$220 million set aside by the Commonwealth and Tasmanian governments, the Tasmanian Irrigation (TI) schemes will have a massive impact on our state when completed.

On top of that, farmer investment in the schemes is also massive – buying equipment, for example pivots, and connecting irrigation once it gets to the farm gate.

To date it is claimed the state's first tranche of irrigation schemes have contributed \$380 million to Tasmania's economy.

It's an amazing workrate for a Government Business Enterprise that was formed on July 1 last year.

TI is the successor company to the former Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the commission's



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former subsidiaries Tasmanian Irrigation Development Board and Tasmanian Irrigation Schemes.

It's not finished yet. The State Government is seeking further \$130 million Federal Government support. It has prepared a comprehensive

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submission for Infrastructure Australia to help roll out the next phase of irrigation schemes across the state.

TI chief executive Chris Oldfield said farm expenditure, activity out of construction and the flow-on effect benefited the community.

The primary aim of the schemes is to boost the wealth of Tasmania by developing the productive capacity of the state's agricultural industries.

TI provides the technical, financial and project management skills to progress schemes from concept development through feasibility and construction to operations.

All schemes developed by TI are designed to last 100 years, deliver water at an average reliability of

greater than 95 per cent and satisfy demand in each region.

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There are 23 schemes throughout the state in various stages.

Not all projects referred make it all the way through.

The schemes are taken from concept to reality through a systematic process. Schemes that are unfeasible, unviable, unsustainable or for which there is simply insufficient demand are halted in the investigation stage.

The \$104 million Midlands Water Scheme is the biggest irrigation project undertaken in Tasmania and will create 130 jobs during the two years it will take to build.

Circular Head in the far North-West may reap a significant economic benefit from a proposed irrigation scheme for the region.

Woolnorth farmer Mike Buckby, a member of the Circular Head Irrigation Scheme farmers' working group, says the scheme has the potential to open up 50,000ha of land for irrigation.

This scheme has gone from a recent discussion forum with about 40 local farmers to information sessions next week being held by TI in conjunction with TFGA. The public sessions will be held at Togari, Smithton, Edith Creek and Forest. Options for investigation include storing water taken from the Arthur River in an off-river dam for distribution throughout the Circular Head region.

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