Demonstrated support for the Don Irrigation Scheme

The Don Irrigation Scheme (DON) forms one of Tasmanian Irrigations (TI) Tranche Three suite of irrigation schemes. A public meeting was held at Lower Barrington in March 2019 to gauge community support and to elect an irrigator representative committee (IRC). The meeting was well received with over 40 people in attendance, demonstrating stronger than expected support for the scheme.

Irrigator Representative Group

The IRC is a volunteer group which represents the various areas of the district and works with the TI project team throughout the schemes development. The IRC members are locals who anybody can speak to regarding information on the DON and were elected from the floor at the public meeting in March.

The IRC consists of seven members comprising of Allan Boyce, Hamish Yaxley, Marcus Harris, Michael Badcock, Neil Armstrong and Randal Parker and is chaired by Melina Burbury. Contact details for the IRC can be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Once the scheme is operational the IRC works with the TI Water Delivery Team throughout the life of the scheme. This committee is re-elected by, and at the discretion of scheme participants.

Preliminary Design

The initial expressions of interest (EOI) process for the DON was conducted in 2018 and resulted in 2,400ML of interest in the Don/Forth areas. In response to lobbying by local landowners the EOI area was extended to include Barrington/Sheffield and West Kentish. This generated another 1,700ML of interest bringing total interest to 4,100ML. The Forth River catchment has been identified as the most reliable source of water for the scheme. The current concept design includes two pump stations. One pump station will be located on the Forth River below Paloona Dam, and the other at Lake Barrington. TI’s focus is to design a scheme that provides the highest economic return for the community and in turn Tasmania’s broader economy. This includes keeping operating costs as low as possible.
Preferred Option and Water Sales

Once all the scheme design options are considered, TI will identify a Preferred Option which we will present to the community. TI encourages feedback on the Preferred Option from the community and stakeholders. At the meeting we will advise the planned cost of water entitlements and the anticipated operating costs. After TI has considered the feedback from the community on the Preferred Option the scheme should be able to proceed to water sales.

Water Sales

Following the Preferred Option approval the scheme will progress to water sales. Water sales is a process where an offer to purchase water entitlements in the scheme is made by landowners. Completion of water sales will confirm the design of the scheme and will confirm the infrastructure that is actually built.

Climate Change

It is essential that any scheme considers the potential of climate change and its impact on future water availability.

TI, in conjunction with CSIRO, models the reliability of TI schemes under a range of climate scenarios.

The CSIRO’s Tasmanian Sustainable Yields project looks at both future climate and future developments in addition to an assumed increase in groundwater extractions to 25pc of recharge. The scheme will need to supply water at a minimum reliability of 95pc, even under a “dry future’ scenario.