

Saving work, water and money

More than 350 km on a motorbike, two weeks of interrupted sleep and 160 MI of water was a usual watering for Stuart Hodge.

Now the Numurkah farmer can water the same 200 ha parcel of land in about three days automatically and with half the water.

Mr Hodge said it was the speed and efficiency of the system, upgraded through Goulburn-Murray Water's Connections project, that made the biggest difference to his cropping operations.

"It also means I can stay in bed every night," Mr Hodge said.

The irrigation system upgrade on the Hodge family's 1234 ha cropping farm started in 2009.

Through winter, wheat, barley, canola and faba beans are grown, and in summer the crop is soy beans.

"For us, irrigation guarantees a good crop yield," Mr Hodge said.

"In my view to have yields sustained year in year out you have to have irrigation.

"My grandfather knew that when he purchased the land in 1942. He knew irrigation was coming, but he had to wait several years for it."

Today the wheat crop is averaging 6.5 tonne/ha, barley 5.5 tonne/ha, canola 2.5 tonne/ha, faba beans 4 tonne/ha and soy beans 3 tonne/ha.

Mr Hodge's belief that irrigation is the key to his operation meant he was one of the first farmers to start discussions with the Connections project team.

"The important emphasis for me was to remain a gravity irrigation system because of energy costs and ultimately flow rates," Mr Hodge said.

Twenty-one wheels will be replaced with eight electronic outlets and some are located side-by-side to maximise flow rates.

One 400 ha parcel of land on the farm now has a channel system that can deliver 55 MI/day.

"When we used to irrigate this block we'd use about 235 MI of water; in the first autumn irrigation with the new system it will only take

about 160 MI . . . it makes a lot of difference," he said.

"The other thing I like is the outlet compensates for any height differences and always delivers an even flow, so I don't have to guesstimate changes to flow."

G-MW's Connections project is connecting landowners to the backbone channel.

The water corporation is investing more than \$2 billion from the state and federal governments to improve the delivery of water to irrigation businesses across the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district.

G-MW managing director Gavin Hanlon said the project was a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to improve irrigation services and resize the corporation's existing network to support the varied and exciting opportunities for irrigated agriculture across the region.

When the Connections project is complete in 2018, G-MW is expected to operate about 3500 km of channels supplying water to about 12 000 irrigation outlets.



Stuart Hodge is irrigating faster, more efficiently and using less water (above).

Twenty-one wheels will be replaced at the Numurkah property with eight electronic outlets, and some are located side-by-side to maximise flow rates (right).



Stuart Hodge grows wheat, barley, canola and faba beans in winter and soy beans in summer.



Automation means Stuart Hodge enjoys a decent night's sleep during the irrigation season.



The Hodge family's cropping farm is 1234 ha.

Save on quality second grade concrete pipes



We stock a large range of 2nd grade concrete pipes. **No rubbish.** We supply our customers with the quality of pipe required to do the job. **Rubber ring quality - no worries.**

Why pay 1st grade prices when cheaper, good quality second grade pipes will do the job just as well?

THINKING PIPES? THINK PIPEWORKS!

- We also sell:
- 1st grade pipes • water troughs
 - headwalls • feed troughs
 - channel stops • bay outlets
 - concrete fencing • box culverts and more...

Pipeworks
Rochester

507 Diggora Rd, Rochester.
Ph: (03) 5484 1799 Fax: (03) 5484 2077
Colin: 0417 107 263 Jim: 0427 866 949
pipeworksrochester@bigpond.com
www.pipe.net.au