



NSWIC
NEW SOUTH WALES
IRRIGATORS'
COUNCIL

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Briefing Note

IRRIGATOR MANAGEMENT GRANT

17 November

Updated Guidelines

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Member Organisations: Bega Cooperative Limited, Border Rivers Food & Fibre, Coleambally Irrigation Co-Op Ltd, Cotton Australia, Gwydir Valley Irrigators' Association Inc., Hunter Valley Water Users' Association, Lachlan Valley Water, Macquarie River Food & Fibre, Murray Irrigation Limited, Mungindi-Menindee Advisory Council, Murray Valley Water Diversers' Association, Murrumbidgee Groundwater Preservation Association, Murrumbidgee Horticultural Council Inc., Murrumbidgee Irrigation Ltd, Murrumbidgee Private Irrigators' Inc., Namoi Water, NSW Farmers' Dairy Committee, NSW Farmers' Association, Ricegrowers' Association of Australia, Richmond Wilson Combined Water Users Association, Riverina Citrus, Southern Riverina Irrigators, South Western Water Users', West Corrgan Private Irrigation District, Wine Grapes Marketing Board.

Detail

The Australian Government has developed several programs to support irrigators and dryland farmers in the Murray-Darling Basin that have been affected by reduced water allocations. One of these programs "Irrigation Management Grants" recently (June 2008) updated its policy guidelines, which we were informed "clarified" the interpretation of the policy. The policy has not changed, only the guidelines to interpret the policy.

This program falls under the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and is being administered by Centrelink.

Program Overview

This program is providing grants of up to \$20,000 (GST exclusive) to assist Murray-Darling Basin irrigators to implement water management strategies. Grants are available to help irrigators undertake a range of approved activities that address reduced water allocations and improve on-farm practices to maximise production from the water that is available.

Irrigators will be able to access to the grant for approved activities undertaken from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2009.

Irrigators can select from the following activities:

- piping, troughs and associated activities for stock and domestic water
- fixed water charges
- sinking/extending/refurbishment of bores (and pumps)
- pruning activities to minimise the impact of low water allocations
- reconfiguring irrigation systems
- equipment replacement to maintain irrigation systems (including computer software, piping and pumps)
- costs associated with implementing water efficient crop options
- laser levelling
- Assistance will **not** be paid for:
 - the purchase or leasing of vehicles
 - purchasing water or fodder
 - refinancing existing loans
 - accounting fees
 - the purchase or service of assets not directly involved in the operation of the farm enterprise.

New Guidelines

We contacted DAFF to see how the new guidelines have improved the way the program was being administered.

They informed us that these new guidelines have assisted Centrelink in determining who qualifies for the program. As Centrelink are not in the water business, this was fairly new for them to have to administer. They are now using these new guidelines to assess each application on a case by case basis.

A meeting between DAFF and Centrelink is taking place this week to review the process and determine how the assessments are going. We will follow up with them and advise of any updates they feel are necessary.

NSWIC recommends that interested parties visit this DAFF information page for an overview of the program:

<http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/drought/assistance/murray-darling-basin>

And this page for an explanation of the guidelines:

http://www.daff.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/832806/guidelines-mdb.pdf