

# DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Response to QoN - Budget Estimates – 23 October 2020

## FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE STOCKTAKE OF OFF FARM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

- Proposals to recover 70 GL of off-farm water have been identified in the Stocktake of Off-Farm Infrastructure Projects by the department, with the total projected water recovery being verified.
- A total of 59 proposals were provided. 52 proposals address water losses and provide potential water recovery. This remains to be tested by through assessment, negotiation and formal commitment from proponents, as well as consultation with communities and assessment of potential socio-economic outcomes. There are:
  - 43 proposals in NSW.
  - 7 proposals in Victoria, including the Goulburn Murray Water – Water Efficiency Project (details publicly released by Victoria).
  - 5 proposals in South Australia.
  - 3 proposals are in Queensland.
- Further proposals are likely to be identified with stakeholders.
- The current proposals address water losses in a variety of ways, including:
  - Complete modernisation of irrigation networks
  - Channel lining
  - Channel re-sizing and rehabilitation
  - Replacing pumps, regulators or offtakes
  - Replacing channels with stock and domestic water supply pipelines, or extending existing pipelines
  - Installing compliant meters, and
  - Decommissioning channels where viable.
- Feasibility studies and negotiations are required to establish a precise estimate of potential water recovery from these proposals, but it may be possible to recover around 70 GL from these projects.
- In December 2019, the Murray-Darling Basin (MDB) Ministerial Council requested a list of off-farm infrastructure projects that could address water losses. In June 2020, the MDB Ministerial Council broadened the scope to include off farm infrastructure investments that could provide regional stimulus, contribute to agricultural productivity and/or result in water savings.
- In July to August 2020, DAWE consulted with off-farm irrigation network stakeholders. Several entities provided concept proposals for the Stocktake, including Basin States, irrigation infrastructure operators, private irrigation districts, and corporations able to provide off-farm water recovery.
- Before project details can be provided, proponents would need to agree. The MDB Ministerial Council is currently considering the stocktake of projects.