

# Irrigation Futures of the Goulburn Broken catchment



SUMMARY FACT SHEET NOVEMBER 2007

## Planning in a world of uncertainty

The world is changing. Climate, trade policies, governments, economic conditions and community preferences all change, often unpredictably.

How will these changes affect irrigated agriculture in the Goulburn Broken catchment over the next 20 to 30 years?

In the face of this uncertainty, how do we plan for a thriving economy, vital communities and a healthy environment in future decades?

## Developing and using scenarios

To face this challenge, Irrigation Futures used scenario planning with extensive stakeholder engagement to develop a vision and strategies for the future of irrigated agriculture in the Goulburn Broken catchment.

This fact sheet outlines the aims, processes and outputs of the project. It illustrates how Irrigation Futures is informing key agencies as they plan for future uncertainty in this important industry and region.



## Engaging the community

We invited more than 120 people – primary producers, processors, representatives of business and community groups, local government, men and women, the young and the not-so-young – to a series of workshops. Our aim was to capture their views, aspirations and concerns for the future in four scenarios. These scenarios describe alternative futures which the region may have to face over the next 30 years. We also collected a large number of ideas for dealing with those futures.

People appreciated the opportunity to be involved:

*“Conversing in a non-adversarial way helped me to broaden my understanding”.*

People’s attitudes were changed:

*“Perhaps my opinion in the past needed to be more flexible.”*

Our Technical Working Group – 23 experienced stakeholders – then examined the effects that the scenarios might have on our region, and the likely responses of industry, communities and agencies. From their analysis, the project team estimated the likely changes in irrigated area, volume of irrigation water used, and farm-gate income produced by each scenario. The Technical Working Group also considered how the scenarios would affect the key features which make the region attractive for investment and living, and the strategies which the region could implement to build on our strengths.

The Technical Working Group found the cross-industry exposure valuable

*“The Technical Working Group gave me the opportunity to talk to very switched on people from other industries.”*

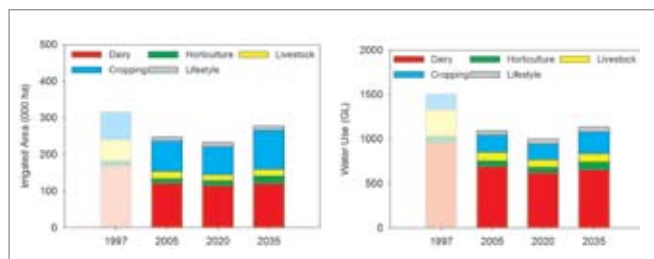
*“I have been involved in these types of issues for many years, but I got a better understanding of the social issues and the need for education”.*

Attitudes changed:

*“I’ve become more aware that change is inevitable, is coming quickly and is necessary for survival and progress”.*

To ensure the Irrigation Futures strategies informed future planning of the region, we worked with agency staff to build the scenario assessments and strategies into their forward planning cycles.

As a result, the forward plans of Goulburn Murray Water, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, the City of Greater Shepparton and Shires of Moira and Campaspe reflect inputs from the Irrigation Futures scenarios.



## Resources to be used

A series of reports from Irrigation Futures are available to help individuals, businesses and other organisations plan for uncertain futures. These include:

- **Scenarios of the future: Irrigation in the Goulburn Broken region**, which provides an overview of irrigation in the region, the drivers for change, regional aspirations, the four scenarios, implications for the region, response strategies, and recommendations on 'where to from here'.
- **Regional scenario planning in practice: Irrigation futures of the Goulburn Broken region**, a guide book of how to use scenario planning with regional communities.
- **Scenario planning for individuals and businesses**, which provides a workbook which irrigators can use to assess the scenario implications for their farm layout and operation, their business plan etc.

## Next steps

Irrigation Futures has shown that scenario planning can be used with regional communities to plan for future uncertainty. It also highlights that agencies and enterprises will need to build flexibility and adaptability into their processes if they are to successfully manage an uncertain future. The project has provided tools and guidelines to assist this process. Further development of such tools to enable flexibility in farming systems and the management processes of agencies and enterprises is needed.



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