



Centre Pivots and Rural Water Authorities

DPI, Tatura

August 2005

AG0000

ISSN 1329-8062

The ability of your Rural Water Authority (Goulburn-Murray Water or other RWA) to supply water when you need it can have a large impact on the way you might develop your centre pivot project.

RWAs such as G-MW encourage efficient irrigation practices, and are receptive to proposals to accommodate centre pivots or other irrigation developments. However, there can be constraints because of the particular channel that supplies your property that you need to plan around.

Talk to your Area Manager before your planning is too far advanced.

Irrigation Supply

Direct suction from the channel

The simplest way to supply your pivot (or other pressurised irrigation) is to have your pump suction pipe coming directly from the RWA channel (known as a direct suction). The suction pipe is well below the normal supply level of the channel, and not affected by minor channel level variations that can affect flows taken through a meter wheel. Automation of the pumped system is readily achieved with a direct suction.

With a direct suction, water use is measured by a flow meter in the suction line, which you need to pay for. If you no longer need the meter wheel for supply to other parts of your property, it will be removed, and any savings to the RWA may offset the cost of the flow meter.

Note that Murray Irrigation Limited does not allow direct suction from their channels, and outlets are opened or closed once each day by the channel attendant. Pumping out of a storage is essential for pumped irrigation systems.

Storage

Alternatively, the pump suction can be from a pit close to the meter wheel, or from a storage, which may be remote from the supply point.

Ordering

You need to be satisfied that the RWA will allow you to

order and take water at the times that you need. On many channels, the RWA may not be able to allow you to frequently take water at night and weekends, which is attractive to people who can utilise off-peak electricity. If the constraints of a direct suction are not acceptable to you, you may need to pump out of a storage to be sure of having the flexibility you need. The storage can be supplied through your existing supply point at times that the RWA is able to supply you.

RWA assets

Often RWA channels and drains cross properties, and may restrict potential pivot sites. In some cases, the RWA may accept a pivot crossing a channel or drain to achieve the desired circle. A bridge would be needed for each tower crossing, or for a small drain a roadway could be constructed through the drain. These would need to be to RWA specifications, and the cost could be substantial, particularly if say up to eight towers need to cross the channel or drain twice. Such an arrangement would limit pivot management options – the RWA could not accept fertilizer or pesticides being applied across a waterway.

Alternatively, the RWA may be able to abandon a particular channel if it can be rationalised, or a small channel could be piped, facilitating crossing of it. While piping of a significant length of RWA channel is likely to be prohibitively expensive for a farmer, the RWA may be prepared to pipe a channel if it is part of a water savings initiative. A contribution from the farmer may assist if the proposal is marginal for the RWA.

Such proposals may be unacceptable to the RWA, or may cost too much, but it is worth exploring the options.

Planning requirements