

CICL Member Update December 2022

Board Update – The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Thursday 27 October. Thank-you to those members who attended our first hybrid AGM either in person or via the on-line option. CICL was satisfied with the arrangements and plans to hold the 2023 AGM as a hybrid meeting.

Members supported the motions presented, which included the re-appointment of Bruce Brown as an Independent Director until March 2024, the adoption of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM, the chairman's 2022 report, and the FY2022 financial reports.

Denise Kelly was also announced as CICL's new member director to fill the vacancy arising from the retirement of Keith Burge. CICL welcomes Denise and thanks Keith for his contribution over nine years to CICL.

After the AGM the board re-elected Peter Sheppard chair and Craig Perkins as deputy.

Water Operations update – Late-December and early-January are expected to be higher irrigation demand periods. We encourage all customers to provide CICL with as much notice as possible of water orders. Once the Murrumbidgee River becomes fully regulated and storage releases are being made to meet water orders, supplementary water access will cease and there will be pressure to ensure CICL's seven-day advance order is accurate.

If you have not already updated your final crop areas, please do so by contacting Water Operations via Reception on T: 02 6954 4003 or after hours on M: 0427 544 269.

Delivery restrictions – CICL's October newsletter detailed our approach to managing delivery restrictions and capacity constraints. More information can be found [here](#). The key point to be aware of is that during a restriction event the available flow is shared between active orders (per farm or per SFU) for tier one and tier two delivery entitlements.

NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment Allocation announcements

15/12/22

High Security	100%
General Security	65%
Groundwater (Lower Murrumbidgee)	100%

CICL announcement and offers

Member benefit	10%
Additional water offer	4%

Waterways

<http://www.colyirr.com.au>

T: 1300 850 105

Christmas operations

CICL Offices

Closed from 12 noon Friday 23 December until 8.30am Tuesday 3 January 2023.

Waterways

No changes with staff contactable on M: 0427 544 269.

WaterMart

Operational, however, trades will not be approved and transferred to allocation accounts between 12 noon Friday 23 December and 8.30am Tuesday 3 January 2023.

Annual transfers

Closed from 12 noon Friday 23 December until 8.30am Tuesday 3 January 2023.

CICL Management & Staff wish you a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.



Inter-valley trade (IVT)

Up-to-date information on the IVT is [here](#).

You can register for WaterNSW IVT alerts [here](#).



Introducing Brendan Mark, Channel Technician.

How long have you worked for CICAL and what is your role? – I have worked for CICAL for two years in a part time capacity and one-year full time as a Channel

Technician.

What were you doing before you joined CICAL? – After year 11 I started a Retail Traineeship, but I left this role because I wanted to work outdoors.

What does your job entail? – I am responsible for ensuring the FlumeGates™ are operating well in one of our regions, which includes repair and maintenance of FlumeGates™.

Do you have any pets and if so what type? – I have two Dachshunds, Charlie and Booza, and one Red Heeler called Pip.

What do you like doing when you are not working? – I like hanging out with mates and riding motor bikes.

What is your favourite quote – “Such is life” – Ned Kelly.

Channels are NOT for swimming in - Irrigation channels are not a safe place to swim or play. As well as the known dangers like varying water depths, submerged objects, and snakes, channels have automated structures that can trap and drown you. These structures are remotely operated resulting in unpredictable flows. I remind you that swimming in channels is **prohibited**. Please ensure your children and visitors are aware of this.



Introducing Jacob Breed, Maintenance Officer.

How long have you worked for CICAL? – I started work for CICAL at the end of June 2022.

What were you doing before you returned to Coleambally? - I was living and working in Canberra as a labourer/operator for a civil engineering company.

What does your job entail? - I work in the maintenance team and I have mainly been operating the mini-excavator.

What's a common question you get from customers/members? - I get asked where I'm at with tasks by other staff members, whether I am operating the excavator or doing jobs around the depot.

What do you like to do when you are not working? - I like to be outside, in summer, swimming and I love going fishing. I also play a fair bit of sport, footy, cricket, tennis, squash, and golf.

What is your favourite quote – “Rise and rise again until lambs become lions” - Robin Hood (The Movie).

Water safety for primary schools - CICAL continues to financially support both of our primary schools to run intensive swimming programs for all primary students. Our goal is to encourage maximum participation in this program, but also for the program to reinforce our message that swimming in channels is prohibited because it's dangerous. *Photo courtesy of St Peters*



Retiring staff – In December, three of CICL’s long standing staff will retire. Here are their stories.



**Mark Robb,
Environmental
Compliance &
Biodiversity Officer**

How long have you worked for CICL and what is your role? – I have worked for CICL for nearly 28 years in a few different departments

but mostly in natural resource management.

What are the things about working for CICL which stand out for you? – The flexibility offered and the diversity of tasks. The establishment of the Coleambally Irrigation Biodiversity Reserve has been rewarding especially being involved in revegetation and sandhill restoration work. Also, the significant reduction in the area affected by high-water tables & salinity is definitely a highlight.

What have you learned from CICL and its members? – Diplomacy, information technology skills and a lot about “best practice”. I have learned and continue to learn more about the natural assets of this region including its flora and fauna.

What would you like CICL and its members to remember about you? – I hope I am thought of as someone who has treated everyone equally, fairly and with consideration. I would also hope I am remembered as an advocate for conservation.

What are the next steps for you? – It’s a big move for me becoming self-employed and operating REMS. *Robb Environment Management Services.*



**Christine Chirgwin,
Reception/Finance
Officer**

How long have you worked for CICL and what is your role? I started in Water Operations 12 years ago. I was involved in Work Health and Safety and then

to Reception. In Reception I have also assisted our compliance team with Piezometer readings and administration of on-farm incentives.

What are the things about working for CICL which stand out for you? – I have enjoyed working with the CICL team and my interactions with members. I have a rural background and have enjoyed maintaining this link with our farming community.

What have you learned from CICL and its members? – I have learned a lot about our irrigation delivery system, Total Channel Control (TCC) and our water delivery efficiency. I like to promote our story.

What would you like CICL and its members to remember about you? – I hope I am remembered as someone who was always helpful and easy to get along with.

What are the next steps for you? – I have recently taken on the role of Secretary Toganmain Woolshed Preservation. Dating back to 1875, the Toganmain Woolshed is the largest remaining woolshed in the NSW Riverina region and holds an iconic status in Australian pastoral folklore. Once a bustling hub of activity, Toganmain saw more than seven million sheep pass through its doors, with the September of 1876 recording a total of 202,292 sheep shorn by 92 blade shearers, an Australian record never to be beaten (*Farm Tender, June 2019*). I will also continue as a Murrumbidgee Councillor until June 2024.

What is your favourite quote? “Don’t sweat the small stuff.”



**Steve Knight,
Channel Technician**

How long have you worked for CICL and what was your role? -

I started with the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission as a carpenter, 54 years

ago, working on the regulators on the Bundure and Yamma systems. In 1972 I moved over to general attendant. From 1978 I lived at, and operated, Gogeldrie Weir. In 1984 I became a water bailiff, working in Region Four of the CIA. I experienced the full changeover from a manual system to TCC.

What are the things about CICL and your work which stand out for you? - CICL is a top company, I have enjoyed the challenges – it kept the mind going. I have enjoyed good relations with staff and management.

What have you learned from CICL and its members? - I have enjoyed the opportunity to learn about computers. Before automation I learned a lot from good relationships with our members.

What would you like CICL and its members to remember about you? - I am a bit old school – when you do your job, do it properly – be always ready to take on the work to be done.

What are the next steps for you? - Retire! Travel and see more of the kids and grandkids. I also plan to spend more time in the shed doing woodwork.

Maintenance update – CICL has started flood recovery maintenance. As excavators become available, repair of CICAL drains will commence. This includes repairing travel banks on drains, removal of trash near structures and repair or replacement of damaged drainage inlets.

The recent flooding resulted in flows in our outfall drains greater than their design flow capacity. As the flows recede CICAL will inspect the drains for silt accumulation and debris and prioritise the works at these sites. In addition, some regulators on the West Coleambally Channel were partially submerged for a long period of time which means the damaged electrical components will need to be replaced. The regulators will remain open while repairs are completed. In addition, where FlumeGates™ were submerged, the gear box oil is being replaced along with any failed motors.

CICAL will also inspect bridge abutments for signs of foundation erosion and if necessary, repair with clay, geofabric and rock spalls.

Mulching of access tracks to reduce fire risks has commenced where access tracks are dry enough for machinery.

Attention is also focussing on the removal of submerged weeds and blowgrass from supply channels. If you notice a build-up of blow grass in a supply channel, please advise maintenance or the water operations via Reception on T: 02 6954 4003 or AH on M: 0427 544 269.

Community Environmental Reference Committee (CERC) – earlier this year CICAL called for nominations to fill vacancies on the CERC. After failing to fill the vacant positions and consulting with the CERC chair, Shona Hando, the Board has agreed to place into recess the operation of the CERC. This will be reviewed annually in June with the activities undertaken by the CERC transferred to the Board. Rule 74 of CICAL's [Rules](#) describes the role and requirements of the CERC. The CERC is an advisory committee, not a decision-making committee. Rule 74.1 states "*The role of the CERC is to provide the Board with advice on environmental matters that might impact on the Co-operative, or that might arise as a consequence of irrigation within the Coleambally Irrigation District*". For further information please contact Paul Clarke, GM Finance & Environmental Compliance, on T: 02 6954 4003.

Water use intensity policy deadline extended

Customers are advised that total farm water use (including on-farm bores) should not exceed 8ML/ha for the current season unless they have entered into Water Use Agreements with CICL. These agreements allow for averaging water use between unconnected farms and exemptions from water use limits for horticulture, permanent plantings, and other approved primary industries. Customers must make an application in writing to CICL for a Water Use Agreement and the Agreement must be **finalised by noon on Friday 23 December**. To apply for a Water Use Agreement please contact Keith Thompson via reception on T: 02 6954 4003.

Drainage off farms into the supply channels

- You are reminded of a blanket prohibition against drainage into the supply channel as this may have dire consequences for members downstream and may affect the operation the TCC system. Penalties include fines as well as the suspension of supply of water. Penalties have been imposed this season. If you are experiencing difficulty because of flooding or another emergency and believe that drainage into the supply system is the only option, please contact CICL on T: 02 6954 4003 and speak to Keith Thompson.

Drainage off farms - You are again advised that draining water contaminated with pesticides into the CICL drainage system is a breach of CICL's Rules. Penalties include fines as well as the suspension of supply of water. Penalties were imposed last season. If you believe that you have accidentally released contaminated water into the drainage system or are experiencing difficulty because of flooding or another emergency and believe that the release of water into CICL's drainage channels is the only option, please contact CICL on T: 02 6954 4003 and speak to Keith Thompson.

External issues

Murray-Darling Basin Plan (the Plan) – The Basin Plan became law 10 years ago. Andrew McConville, CEO of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, spoke at the Canberra Press Club and his speech is [here](#).

A key take home from Andrew's address was that it is likely that the key projects that reduce the

volume of water that needs to be recovered from the consumptive pool, such as constraints, will not be completed by June 2024.

This means the MDBA will do a reconciliation in early 2024 and advise the Minister of new (lower) Sustainable Diversion Limits. The potential shortfall is between 190GL and 315GL. This shortfall, if it materialises, is significant and will impact the southern Basin.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder also released 10 things to know about water for the environment which is available [here](#).

The Hon. Tanya Plibersek released an Opinion Piece titled "Murray-Darling Basin Plan can be frustrating but it's working" which can be found [here](#).

Are there going to be buybacks? - Some water brokers jumped on the discussion at Senate Estimates on Friday 11 November and reached out to irrigators via text and email implying an Expression of Interest was open for irrigators to sell their water to the Commonwealth.

This was corrected by the Commonwealth Department on Monday 14 November with the following:

- There are no Commonwealth water purchase programs currently open.
- The Commonwealth has not issued a tender and is not evaluating unsolicited offers. Unsolicited offers previously received by the Department will be considered in due course.
- The Commonwealth has not engaged any firms or other third parties to act on its behalf to acquire water entitlements.
- The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council of October 2022 restated the commitment to work together in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration to overcome the challenges to delivering the Basin Plan and noted as a matter of priority, the Commonwealth will work with relevant communities and Basin states on options to bridge the remaining (49GL) gap in water recovery, including through strategic purchase.

In the Murrumbidgee Valley there is **no** remaining bridging the gap volume, which means in the first instance, the Murrumbidgee Valley will not be a target for buyback. However, the new Minister

has made it clear "all options are on the table" for finalising the Basin Plan.

The Commonwealth Government is preparing a water recovery strategy which is expected early next year. This strategy will give the first insights into the next steps for water recovery and what is meant by the words "strategic purchase".

The next Ministerial Council meeting is crucial. At this meeting governments have agreed to present solutions for meeting their commitments to the Basin Plan. Options such as new projects and extending the deadlines for the volumes and deadlines in the Basin Plan may be included.

CICL supports increased flexibility to bring new projects into the adjustment mechanism and extending the deadlines for completing valuable projects such as the Reconnecting River Country (constraints relaxation). Our overall effort is focussed on minimising any harmful impacts of the next steps for Basin Plan implementation on CICL and its community. We continue to support the key messages developed by both National Irrigators' Council [here](#) and NSW Irrigators' Council [here](#).

Metering compliance deadline extended –

For members with groundwater bores the deadline for compliance with the NSW non-urban metering standard has been extended to 1 June 2023. Further information is [here](#).

Special disaster grants – The Rural Assistance Authority is administering special disaster grants. The Murrumbidgee LGA is one of the declared LGAs eligible for assistance. Further information is [here](#). These grants may be relevant to members who have suffered infrastructure damage because of the recent flooding.

Conclusion – I am pleased to welcome Denise Kelly to our Board and am confident Denise will make a valuable contribution as did retiring director Keith Burge.

CICL has expressed its appreciation to WaterNSW for its management of the releases from both Burrinjuck and Blowering Dams. Whilst it is acknowledged the recent flooding has significantly impacted some communities, CICL believes WaterNSW, through their careful management of airspace, has managed to

minimise the impact of flooding on downstream communities.

I encourage members to take time to read the two position statements on the Plan released by NSW Irrigators' Council and National Irrigators' Council. As key dates approach there is significant pressure on the need to finalise the Plan. The documents complement each other and highlight what industry is seeking from decision makers.

In November, Peter Sheppard was re-elected to the Board of NSWIC, and Jenny McLeod was elected Deputy Chair of National Irrigators' Council. Our involvement and continued support for these organisations is a key part of our strategy to advocate for the irrigation sector to governments and in the wider media.

This newsletter profiles three of our long-term staff who retire in December. We thank them for their service and wish them well in their next endeavours. All three have made significant contributions to CICL.

We have also welcomed Travis Ashe to the business. Travis has joined as the GIS Officer and comes to us with a wealth of experience. Travis will be working both remotely and from the CICL Office.

We continue to review our experiences each season and this year we will identify any opportunities to improve the performance of our drainage system which includes working with Murrumbidgee Council to identify opportunities to address roadside drainage.

I understand this year has proved challenging for many of our members with record rainfall impacting winter and summer cropping programs. I trust the challenging harvest concludes successfully and CICL looks forward to delivering irrigation water to members for their summer crops in the New Year.

On behalf of CICL management and staff I wish you and your families a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Clifford Ashby
CEO