

## AGM and Director update

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on Thursday 26 October. Thank you to those members who attended and joined online for our second hybrid AGM. CICL was satisfied with the arrangements and plans to hold next year's AGM as a hybrid meeting.

Members supported the motions presented, which included the re-appointment of Sharon Smith as an Independent Director, the adoption of the 2022 AGM minutes, the chairman's 2023 report, the FY2023 financial reports and the proposed Rule changes.

At the CICL AGM the chair announced the results of the recent Director Election. Craig Perkins will continue as a Director for a further three-year term. The chair also thanked Robert Black for his interest.

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

**Rule changes** - Thank you to those members who attended the AGM and voted in favour of CICL's new Rules. The final step in the process was for the Registrar of Co-operatives to register CICL's new Rules, which occurred on 9 November 2023. The new Rules are available on our website [here](#).

## Water operations update

The remainder of December and January are expected to be high irrigation demand periods. We encourage all customers to place water orders seven days in advance, if possible, to reduce the risk of supply shortfalls and having to implement capacity sharing. If you have not already updated your final summer crop areas, please do so by contacting CICL on T: 02 6954 4003 as this helps us to forecast order demand.

More information on how CICL manages supply restriction events can be found [here](#).

## NSW Department of Planning & Environment Allocation announcements

**1/12/2023**

High Security	95%
General Security	46%
Groundwater (Lower Murrumbidgee)	100%

### CICL announcement and offer

Member benefit	10%
Additional water offer	6%

### Waterways

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

T: 1300 850 105

### Christmas operations

#### CICL Offices

Closed from 12 noon Friday 22 December until 8.30am Tuesday 2 January 2024.

#### 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 22 December and 8.30am Tuesday 2 January 2024.

#### Annual transfers

Closed from 12 noon Friday 22 December until 8.30am Tuesday 2 January 2024.

**WaterMart** - The WaterMart platform can be accessed [here](#).

#### Inter-valley trade (IVT)

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

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



CICL Management & Staff wish you a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year.  
The CICL Office will be closed from midday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023 to 8:30am Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024

**Blow grass** continues to effect water delivery by obstructing flow through outlets, regulators and culverts. With the large scale of the channel system and the way the blow grass builds up slowly over time, it can be difficult for us to detect these issues before they affect flow.

#### *Blowgrass at Coly 8 Regulator*



Water orders downstream of an affected location may be impacted temporarily while the obstruction is cleared. This is especially difficult during weekends with a reduced number of staff monitoring the system. In response, CICAL has placed additional staff on-call during weekends. Some members and customers have installed screens of tin or mesh upstream of their outlets. Please monitor and control the build-up of blow grass on these screens. If you observe build-up of blow grass restricting delivery, please report the issue to Water Operations.

Water Operations contact details

- T: 02 6954 4003 – business hours only (8.30am to 5pm)
- M: 0427 544 269 – business hours and after hours (please note this phone does not receive SMS text messages).

## **Staff changes**

After an extensive search CICAL is pleased to have engaged **Travis Smith** in a Business Analyst role. Travis comes to CICAL from private enterprise, with extensive business process and enterprise resource planning skills. Travis's focus will be in assisting CICAL implement their Digital Transformation Roadmap.



**Introducing Travis Smith - How long have you worked for CICAL and what is your role?** – I have worked with CICAL for one month as an Information Systems – Business Analyst.

**What were you doing before you joined CICAL?** – My wife and I ran our own business in Yarrawonga, it was a tourism, hospitality business on Lake Mulwala.

**What does your job entail?** – My role is to act as a conduit between the business and the information systems that service the business needs.

**What is a common question you get from staff?** – At this stage I am the one asking the questions.

**What is the favourite part of your job?** – My favourite part of any Information Technology role is getting to know the business/industry.

**What do you like to do when you are not working?** – I spend most of my time outside of work chasing around after our three kids.

**What is your favourite quote** – *"Focus on the positives."*

**George Payne**, Quality Assurance Officer leaves CICAL in mid-December to pursue travel and farming interests. CICAL has valued George's contribution as our Inaugural Grant Latta Scholarship recipient. We wish George well in his next venture and hope he will continue to contribute to CICAL from the "other side of the outlet."

## Environmental Compliance

**Water use intensity policy** – 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 CICAL. These agreements allow for averaging water use between unconnected farms and exempting farms from water use limits for horticulture, permanent plantings, and other approved primary industries. Customers must make an application in writing to CICAL for a Water Use Agreement and the Agreement must be finalised before the mid-December allocation announcement for the Agreement to apply for the current season. Please contact Keith Thompson via reception on T: 02 6954 4003 for further information.

**Drainage water** – Customers are advised that draining water contaminated with pesticides, at a level above the EPA notification level, into the CICAL drainage system is a breach of CICAL's Rules. As part of routine compliance monitoring for our Environmental Protection Licence, CICAL staff regularly monitor the drainage network and sample water from drainage outlets. If you are unsure of the quality of on-farm water you wish to drain, customers may request on-farm water testing. If you have accidentally released contaminated water into the drainage system, please contact Keith Thompson on M: 0439 084 569.

**Metolachlor** - Any customers who are intending to use the herbicide Metolachlor (found in products such as Dual Gold, Boxer Gold, Clincher Gold etc) on their property this season are reminded that they are required to register their details by contacting CICAL via reception at their earliest convenience and to include this information on your crop forms. This measure will assist CICAL staff in responding to any potential pollution incident in an appropriate and timely manner.

**Coleambally Environmental and Reference Committee (CERC)** - At the AGM on 26 October 2023, our chairman Peter Sheppard called for members that may be interested in or nominating for the CERC to contact CICAL. The CERC is currently in recess and the board may consider re-establishing the committee if there is sufficient

interest from members. The purpose of the CERC is to provide the board with advice on environmental matters that might impact on CICAL or its members. The CERC may also be requested by the board to act as a reference group on other matters, not just environmental. A workshop is being planned for early in the new year where participants will be encouraged to share any ideas relevant to a future CERC.

Please contact Paul Clarke, General Manager Environmental Compliance at [compliance@colyirr.com.au](mailto:compliance@colyirr.com.au) prior to 31 January 2024 if you would like to participate in the workshop or have any questions on the matter.

## External issues

**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.



**Water safety for primary schools** - CICAL has again financially supported both of our local 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 Peter's Primary School 2023.*



**Water Amendment (Restoring our Rivers) Bill 2023** – This Bill was passed in the Senate and then the House of Representatives on Thursday 30 November.

This is the first time the Water Act and Murray Darling Basin Plan legislation has been changed without bipartisan support. As CICAL has previously said to members, we have been exposed to raw politics with the government negotiating with the Australian Greens and individual cross benchers to gain their support in the Senate.

The key changes from the Bill are:

- The states have more time to deliver their sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism (SDLAM) projects.
- The states can bring forward new SDLAM projects, with any new and existing projects to be completed by December 2026.
- Constraints relaxation projects have until December 2027.
- The Minister (Commonwealth) has more time and increased flexibility to deliver the 450GL and water purchase can be part of the 450GL.
- The 1,500GL cap on buyback has been removed.
- The social and economic test will not apply to buyback of the 450GL.
- The Water Market Reforms previously announced will be introduced progressively.

In terms of the 450GL, the legislation is written as *the Minister must take all reasonable steps* to increase the volume. It does not mandate 450GL.

The Commonwealth is currently developing its programs for delivering the 450GL.

The programs being considered include:

- A new approach to water savings infrastructure with more flexibility. This could include programs run by states and direct projects with the Commonwealth. Projects may include on-farm infrastructure.
- Water purchase.
- Sustainable communities – structural adjustment with this funding linked to buybacks and delivered through the States.

The government is in the planning phase - there is no detail about individual programs, the timing, and volumes being sought from catchments.

More information will be released by the Commonwealth Department at the end of January 2024.

CICAL will aim to keep members informed of the options and opportunities once more information is available.

CICAL and Murrumbidgee Irrigation are optimistic the Murrumbidgee Optimisation project will be supported allowing the opportunity for a new SDLAM project centred in the mid-Murrumbidgee. We have been seeking feasibility funding to determine the scope of this project for over 12 months.

**Rural Assistance Authority Loans** – The NSW Government has announced two new loans available through the Rural Assistance Authority which may benefit some members.

There is a new program of \$250 million called The Drought Ready and Resilient Fund and \$120M in the Drought Infrastructure Fund (which is a changed and renamed Farm Innovation Fund), both offer loans of up to \$1 million, at a low interest rate of 2.5 per cent.

Applications are open for both programs and more information is available at [NSW Rural Assistance Authority](#).

**Regional Wellbeing Survey** – The University of Canberra Regional Wellbeing Survey is underway again and is now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year. This year the University is aiming to receive responses from at least 6,000 people who live in the Basin. The results of the survey will be used by the Murray Darling Basin Authority during their evaluation and review of the Murray Darling Basin Plan. There is a short option and a longer version option.

CICAL encourages you or other members of your family to participate, the more people from regions like ours the better. The survey can be accessed [here](#). If you would like more information, please call T: 1800 981 499 between 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.

**Lowbidgee Tour** – The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder has offered to host a tour of the Lowbidgee for CICAL members. This would be a one-day tour to provide members with

an opportunity to look at the environmental watering and wetland management in the Lowbidgee.

More details will be available in January with the tour planned for the week starting Monday 19 February. If you would like to register your interest, please call reception on T: 02 6954 4003.

**Conclusion** – It has been a whirlwind nine weeks since I commenced at CICAL in October. I have appreciated the support received by the board and staff. Kat and I value the welcome that CICAL and the Coleambally community have provided to us and our children.

I commenced just as major changes to Commonwealth legislation – potentially affecting the volume of water available to CICAL and our members – were being actively negotiated through the Parliament. This introduced me to our challenges and the many stakeholders in our industry.



*Photo - CICAL, Murrumbidgee Irrigation and Murray Irrigation, meeting with the Hon. Rose Jackson, NSW Minister for Water.*

CICAL and your board are actively considering what the changes to the Water Act and Murray Darling Basin Plan may mean for CICAL, its members and the Coleambally community. This includes what opportunities could be created to minimise the impact of further water recovery and provide enduring benefits to CICAL and its members.

I am confident as CICAL takes stock and more information is available we will have a conversation with members about the opportunities.

Operationally I have enjoyed the opportunity to be out in the field. I have seen firsthand the challenges our operations are facing with blow grass in our channels. I encourage members to report buildup of blow grass in the channels to Water Operations. We will have resources over the Christmas break to help remove blow grass where necessary.

CICAL looks forward to delivering irrigation water to members for their summer crops in the New Year. I encourage members to respond to our request for final summer crop areas.

On behalf of CICAL management and staff I wish you and your families a happy and safe Christmas and New Year. I am looking forward to what 2024 will bring for CICAL and its members.

**Julian Speed**  
**CEO**