

Joint Media Release



Australian Government

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for the Environment and Water



The Hon Harriet Shing MLC
Minister for Water
Minister for Housing
Minister for Equality

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

SUNRAYSIA REGION SWEEPED OFF ITS FEET BY MAJOR WATER UPGRADES

Communities across Mildura, Red Cliffs and Merbein will benefit from major upgrades to water infrastructure, with works now complete and set to deliver safe and reliable access to a secure water supply in the Sunraysia region.

Minister for Water Harriet Shing visited Nichols Point Primary School in Mildura last week to announce the completion of the \$37.9 million Sunraysia Water Efficiency Project (SWEP), which has upgraded outdated infrastructure to deliver long-term water security for the region's agricultural sector and growing communities.

Over the past two years, the SWEP team worked more than 125,000 hours and carried out over 800 site inspections to replace an unsafe open channel with a 25 kilometre underground concrete-lined pipeline, along with 30 kilometres of fencing and 700 escape ladders to improve community safety around water.

The project also delivered a 2.5 kilometre buried pipeline across the Mildura, Red Cliffs and Merbein irrigation districts, building on upgrades to more than 450 meters and the installation of 100 modern flow metres—reducing wastage and promoting sustainable water management.

Lower Murray Water worked with community to repurpose 350 historic Dethridge wheels previously used to measure water flow in open channels, a function now retired with the underground pipeline complete. To preserve the region's rich irrigation history, 30 wheels are being donated to a local artist for a display at Nichols Point Primary School.

This milestone marks a major step forward for the Lower Murray region, with SWEP set to recover at least 1.8 GL of water across the Murray-Darling Basin—equal to 700 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Supported by the Australian Government's Off-Farm Efficiency Program, SWEP has upgraded around 27 kilometres of irrigation channel in total, creating over 100 full time jobs in the process.

SWEP is expected to generate a \$20 million boost to regional Victoria's economy, ensuring the Sunraysia district maintains its competitive edge in the food and agriculture sector through more efficient water delivery.

Quotes attributable to Australian Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek

"Projects like this one in Sunraysia are a win-win – they make irrigation more efficient for farmers, improve amenity for communities and deliver much needed water back to the environment."

"Recovering the 450 gigalitre target is critical to full implementation of the Basin Plan so we can return the rivers to health in the face of a drying climate."

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Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Harriet Shing

“Victoria has led the way in delivering our commitments under the Basin Plan, and in delivering reliable water and reducing wastage, the SWEP is another big achievement for our communities, environments, and food producers.”

“We know that it’s projects just like this that will have a lasting and positive impact on our communities, industries, and environments.”

Quotes attributable to SWEP Project Director, Daniel Freitag

“It has been fantastic to be involved in a project delivered by locals for the long-term benefit of irrigators across Sunraysia.”

“The pride and commitment of the SWEP team has been evident from day one, and shows in the outcomes we’ve achieved.”