

Western Irrigation Network (WIN) feasibility study

Western Water is leading a feasibility study into the Western Irrigation Network - a proposed grid of more than 50km of pipelines to bring recycled water to agricultural precincts for irrigation.

The WIN has the potential to transform the region west of Melbourne into a thriving agricultural hub, supplying fresh food to both local and international markets and providing employment to hundreds of people.

The feasibility study is the first step in understanding the opportunities and viability of a western irrigation network. The feasibility study and business case are due to be submitted to the Victorian Government in March 2018.

Potential benefits

If the feasibility study shows the WIN is economically viable, the project has the potential to:

- create hundreds of jobs, supporting sustainable regional communities through economic growth
- greatly increase the use of recycled water for irrigation, reducing recycled water discharge into waterways, and improving waterway health
- mitigate future impacts of climate change by reducing drinking water use and making the most of sustainable alternative water resources
- help existing agribusinesses to expand, and new ventures start up, with the benefit of a reliable, high-quality water supply and proximity to sea, rail, air freight and markets

- help regional communities confidently invest and grow by increasing opportunities for local industries that are sustainable and flexible
- boost Victoria's food tourism industry by creating a lively fresh food hub close to Melbourne.

Recycled water

Western Water already supplies recycled water, produced from treated sewage, to agricultural businesses in Sunbury, Melton and the Macedon Ranges.

Recycled water is a reliable, high-quality water supply that can be used for a range of agricultural purposes. As the population of the region grows, so too does the amount of recycled water produced.

Water for Victoria

The WIN project would support many key themes of the Victorian Government's plan for managing the state's water future, *Water for Victoria*.

These themes include:

- Water for agriculture
- Resilient and liveable cities and towns
- Realising the potential of Victoria's water grid and water markets
- Jobs, economy and innovation
- Climate change



The WIN feasibility study is funded through the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund, with co-investment from Western Water, the Victorian Government, Moorabool Shire Council and the City of Melton.

The study will work closely with stakeholders, including local farmers, to assess the land capability, market potential and hydraulic design requirements of the project.

Proposed region for the Western Irrigation Network

Melbourne's West is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia. Population forecasts indicate that the region will accommodate more than 40 per cent of metropolitan Melbourne's population growth over the next 40 years.

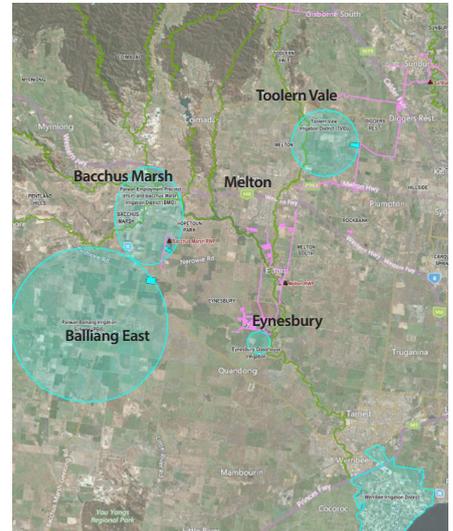
Its proximity to Melbourne gives this region access to domestic and export markets, transport opportunities and a growing labour market.

The region has quality agricultural land that could be further developed. There are good soils, suitable topography, large lot sizes and minimal urban development pressure in areas beyond Melbourne's urban growth boundary.

The region is already home to agricultural businesses in a variety of sectors that are looking to grow and intensify production.

If agricultural businesses in the region are to grow, they will need access to a secure, reliable water supply.

The region has relatively lower annual rainfall than surrounding areas. Some crops are being grown with irrigation such as bore water, but traditional water supplies are limited.



What does the feasibility study involve?

The WIN feasibility study is designed to establish whether the costs of building a western irrigation network are justified by the economic, social and environmental benefits it would bring.

The feasibility study will:

- Engage and consult with stakeholders such as potential customers, local and state governments and industry bodies to assess potential demand for recycled water, supply conditions and prices.
- Investigate what prior research has been done in this area, and whether there are existing initiatives or plans (such as local government plans or regulations) that would support the project.
- Carry out an engineering assessment on potential design and linkages with existing recycled water schemes.
- Conduct a financial and economic analysis and investigate how the project would be funded.
- Assess possible water storage options such as surface storage and managed aquifer recharge, including infrastructure and ongoing operational costs.
- Undertake a risk analysis of the project and investigate regulatory and legal obligations.
- Undertake a cultural heritage review, including the use of water from a cultural perspective and any potential heritage impact from infrastructure.

Potential customers

If you are a landowner or grower in the region of the WIN feasibility study, and you are interested in finding out more about the project, you can contact Luke Wilson at luke.wilson@westernwater.com.au