



# Murrumbidgee Groundwater Inc.

PO Box 342, Finley NSW 2713, Australia.

## DOWN UNDER NEWSLETTER

May 2009

### From the Chairman

#### Challenging Times

It goes without saying that the length of the dry conditions and the economic downturn is testing our ability to stay positive, however in terms of productivity, groundwater users have a marginal advantage with added access to water.

The continuing drought is placing added pressure on all water resources and as a result the focus on groundwater is under constant scrutiny in line with surface water. As we've mentioned before attention is being directed to the connectivity of surface and groundwater.

Our new CEO Jennie Hehir has been proactive in her new role initiating and attending consultation meetings with the various bodies that are influencing our water resource. Jennie is also consulting with NSWIC writing submissions which are being thrown our way constantly. After attending politically



Richard Stott—Chairman

driven workshops, and the like, it is imperative that we are involved in every process where possible to represent groundwater. Without our input I am loath to consider the consequences. One wonders when our city counterparts and many political leaders will value our industries and the fact that we grow food for this country plus the world that is experiencing low supplies. It is a huge disappointment that influential activists and politicians have what

appears to be a very negative view of irrigated agriculture, however I do believe that our continued presence and knowledge building via engaging with political influences is having a positive impact.

I wish you all a constructive sowing season capitalising on the recent rainfall and hope that our next publication will provide a more positive outlook.

Richard Stott—Chairman

#### 5th Annual Water Summit

Jennie and Richard attended the 5th Annual Water Summit in Sydney on the 1, 2 & 3rd April 2009. The summit was coordinated by Acevents.

Irrigator representation was very minimal, therefore Richard and Jennie were very pleased that they participated and were given many opportunities to speak out on your behalf. Some of the key note speakers included – Tom Hatton (CSIRO), Rob Freeman acting chair of the (MDBA), Dr Pandora Hope (BOM), Maude Barlow international water activist from Canada. Ms Barlow received much of the media attention. You may have seen her on SBS News or read some articles written about her visit to Australia. Jennie had the opportunity to engage with her during the summit and pointed out to her the positive aspects of our ability to grow food. Its all very well for someone with Ms Barlow's profile to visit our country and present her view on our water reform policy, however, whilst we don't deny that her level of knowledge is extremely broad, her point of view does not include the necessity that we need food to survive. Her presentation did not include a balance of food production and environmental initiatives.

CEO  
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Jennie Hehir—CEO

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By the time you receive this newsletter our website should be up and running with the domain name: [www.mgi.org.au](http://www.mgi.org.au). Due to time constraints the website will be very basic initially. It would be greatly appreciated if you could forward to Jennie Hehir: [jenniehehir@bigpond.com](mailto:jenniehehir@bigpond.com) any suitable photo's or articles in relation to groundwater that would compliment and enhance the website. If there are particular requirements that you would like added to the site, Jennie will be happy to assist by providing information where possible.

If you would like to receive hot off the press information re groundwater issues that arise from time to time, please forward your email address and phone number to Jennie so that she can add your details to a data base. Many issues are old news by the time the MGI newsletter is re-released.



MGI has had yet another great response to levy collection during times of economic hardship. Without your strong financial support the organisation would not be able to function. Your support reflects the high priority that you place on protecting your valuable asset at a time when many influences constantly argue against our level of use and existence. The organisation is viewed as a professional body in all areas of consultation. Our executive recognise your dedication towards the organisation and continually work hard to achieve positive outcomes relating to all issues surrounding groundwater.

### CSIRO Sustainable Yield Report

On the 4 February MGI in conjunction with MPII initiated a roundtable meeting with the CSIRO and invited Coleambally Irrigation, Murrumbidgee Irrigation, RAMROC, RGA and Griffith Horticulture to participate. The purpose of the roundtable was a follow up consultation process to discuss the findings of the report in more detail. We were relatively pleased with the outcome. The CSIRO suggested that we forward submissions surrounding the controversial reporting to the MDBA as there will be opportunity under the authorities jurisdiction to influence the outcome. MGI and MPII will continue to liaise with the MDBA.

### Water Sharing Plans

You should have received an Information for Groundwater Users in the Lower Murrumbidgee from Prem Kumar DWE. If you didn't or cannot locate the paper, let Jennie know and she will email you another copy. Highlights of paper

1. Likelihood of lower water determinations next year.
2. All temporary and permanent trades are subject to assessment by DWE (an application does not mean that approval will be granted)
3. Local management area rules still apply
4. Landholders need to have water in their account prior to any extractions

### GUM

**Date for your diary!!! Groundwater Users and Managers (GUM) annual conference: 10th & 11th August 2009, North Burdekin region near Townsville QLD. Contact Jennie for further details.**

Gum represent groundwater users and managers nationally. The NWC is sponsoring the annual conference. Gum will operate with assistance from Irrigation Australia Ltd (IAL). The organisation will assist governments to build a national approach to managing groundwater systems to deliver long-term economic, social and environmental outcomes.

## National Groundwater Action Plan

A comprehensive \$82 million National Groundwater Action Plan initiated by the National Water Commission in 2007 is investing in projects to improve our knowledge and understanding of groundwater. The plan consists of three major components:

1. The National Groundwater Assessment Initiative
2. National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training
3. Knowledge and Capacity Building component.

**The National Groundwater Assessment Initiative** is a \$50 million centrepiece of the action plan. It

funds hydro geological investigations to help overcome critical groundwater knowledge gaps. There are eight priority investment themes.

**National Centre for Groundwater Research and Training** is a \$30 million joint venture between the NWC and the Australian Research Council that will build capacity in groundwater knowledge and tackle the shortage of skilled groundwater scientists and managers in Australia. The Centre will train postgraduates and postdoctoral scientists in advanced hydro geological and related technologies.

**Knowledge and Capacity Building**

**component** is a \$2 million component in delivering principles, guidelines and good practice examples that can be used by groundwater managers, users and water planners to improve understanding and sustainable management of groundwater resources.

**Groundwater Technical Advisory Committee (GTAC)** The NWC has established a GTAC to advise on groundwater direction setting and investment strategies to ensure that the groundwater program delivers outputs that are consistent with the NWC. For further information visit: [www.nwc.gov.au](http://www.nwc.gov.au)