# WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECT LANDOWNER GUIDE







Images in this document by Kayla Frizzell

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We use case studies in this guide to help explain certain concepts. The names used and the situations used are fictional and not intended to resemble real life.

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#### **MEANINGS OF THE TERMS WE USE:**

#### You

An owner of a property or multiple properties that are serviced by assets proposed to be treated as part of the GMW Water Efficiency Project.

#### We

The Water Efficiency Project or an authorised representative of the Project (such as a contractor engaged by the Project).

#### **Water Efficiency Project**

The \$177.5 million Commonwealth funded project focused on upgrading or decommissioning ageing off-farm infrastructure in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

#### Co-contribution

An opportunity for you in which you can contribute to the cost of works to achieve your preferred outcome, this may be for your on-farm scope or for the GMW assets servicing your property.

#### Fit for purpose

A fit for purpose solution is one that is appropriate based on historic water use and intended future use. This is determined in accordance with the GMW Water Efficiency Project's Operational Rules.

#### **Goulburn-Murray Water**

The rural water corporation responsible for delivering the Water Efficiency Project.

#### On-farm works design

The works that the Project proposes to construct on a property associated with reconnecting the property to the reconfigured GMW water delivery system.

#### Independent review

An additional layer of assurance to landowners that our draft final reconfiguration plans are consistent with our Operational Rules.

The Independent Reviewer provides recommendations to the Project as to whether GMW's reconfiguration plan or proposed landowner agreement for on-farm works is consistent with the Project's Operational Rules and policies.

#### **Operational Rules**

A set of principles proposed by the Water Efficiency Project to guide project staff in making design and operations decisions.

These principles address matters such as how we determine the size of service points, GMW pipeline/channel levels of service, operational and maintenance payments, voluntary dry-off, co-contribution and property consolidation.

#### Reconfiguration

The process in which GMW rearranges, reshapes, reforms and/or redesigns its water delivery infrastructure, which includes meters and channels.

#### **Reconfiguration Plan**

The adopted plan for reconfiguration of GMW-owned water delivery infrastructure.

Depending on the reconfiguration process adopted by GMW, the plan may go through several stages before it is adopted as final: desktop concept reconfiguration plan; concept reconfiguration plan; draft final reconfiguration plan and finally, a reconfiguration plan.

#### **ABOUT THIS GUIDE**

This guide was created to help you understand how the GMW Water Efficiency Project will interact with you and your business in delivering works to modernise or decommission the delivery system for the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District.

This Guide is intended to be read in conjunction with the Project's Guide to the Operational Rules.

We want to make sure that you have access to the information you need at the right time, and that if you have questions, that you know where to get help.

This guide aims to answer some of the questions you may have about how the works under the GMW Water Efficiency Project will be delivered, the way that project representatives may engage with you and the rules under which the project will operate.

#### Who this guide is for?

This guide is for GMW customers who are serviced by the GMW assets that form part of the Water Efficiency Project's scope and who will remain connected to the reconfigured irrigation system.

We refer to these customers as 'you' or 'landowners' throughout this guide.

#### Your privacy

The GMW Water Efficiency Project and the Independent Reviewer are committed to protecting personal information provided by you in accordance with the principles of Victoria's privacy laws.

The collection and use of information by the GMW Water Efficiency Project and the Independent Reviewer complies with the privacy principles set out in the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

All personal information you provide, including information provided during landowner consultation, the reconfiguration process and in any submissions you make on a reconfiguration plan will be handled in accordance with this Act.

#### INTRODUCTION

The GMW Water Efficiency Project (Project) is delivering modernisation and rationalisation works that have been identified across the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District (GMID) to deliver automation and rationalisation opportunities and water savings.

The Project is expected to benefit approximately 1,000 customers by modernising or decommissioning more than 250 km of channels and upgrading or rationalising more than 1,000 outlets. Water savings totalling 15.9 GL will be achieved by undertaking these works.

The Project provides the opportunity for the recovery of water through investment in efficiency measures, which will generate benefits for local and regional communities, reduce the ongoing asset financial liability and achieve environmental enhancements.

The GMW Water Efficiency Project will use off-farm infrastructure changes to help meet Victoria's obligations as part of Murray Darling Basin Plan and avoids water buybacks by the Commonwealth Government.

The scope of the GMW Water Efficiency Project includes treating channels and meters throughout all six GMID areas. This is an opportunity to rationalise some parts of the ageing irrigation system, and reduce ongoing asset liability.

Together with the recently completed \$2 billion Connections Project, the GMW Water Efficiency Project will maintain Victoria's competitive advantage in the agri-food sector with greater stability in its agricultural productive systems maintain Victoria's competitive advantage in the agri-food sector with greater stability in its agricultural productive systems, providing a more sustainable future for the GMID and supporting further regional development.

#### **Key points:**

## We will design solutions on a channel by channel basis

 How we treat the channel that you connect to will be based on the channel's attributes – meaning, if it is a low loss channel, it may be retained rather than decommissioned.

## We have developed a clear and transparent process for engaging with landowners about the reconfiguration of the GMW water delivery system.

- We will consult with you about any irrigation assessment and concept changes we propose for the GMW water delivery system.
- For example, the location of meters or whether we retain or decommission a channel. You will have opportunities to have your say on our proposal however, the Project is guided by its Operational Rules so it is important you understand we may not always be able to accommodate your specific requests.

## On-farm works to reconnect your property to the water supply will be carried out by us

To ensure the project meets important quality, health and safety, and our completion requirements, our contractors will be carrying out on-farm works. Payments to landowners to carry out their own on-farm works will only be available in circumstances that meet requirements of a co-contribution arrangement.

#### THE RECONFIGURATION PROCESS

Statutory Reconfiguration was a key element in the success of the GMW Connections Project. The GMW Connections Project successfully implemented its remaining scope after the Project Reset in 2016 using this statutory reconfiguration process. The statutory reconfiguration process enabled project representatives to engage with landowners in a way that ensured there was consistency applied across the project, giving all landowners equal opportunity to work with the project to deliver the most suitable outcome for their property.

The reconfiguration process that is planned to be used on the GMW Water Efficiency Project provides a number of clear steps to reach agreement with landowners. This also includes the ability to use statutory powers if required to reconfigure the GMW water delivery system, following consultation with affected landowners.

It is important to note that statutory reconfiguration only addresses the impact on GMW's assets, such as channels and meters. It does not affect any privately owned infrastructure or assets (i.e. on-farm infrastructure which connects you to the water delivery network). When we reconfigure the system, we offer customers the opportunity to reconnect to the network – we call this the on-farm works component.

#### **Key Point:**

We separate the project into two streams of work that we carry out at the same time:

- The reconfiguration process, which applies to the GMW water delivery system; and
- On-farm works, where we reconnect customers to the reconfigured system – we need your formal agreement to do any on-farm works.

We do this at the same time in the hope of avoiding any interruption to your access to GMW service.

#### What is involved in a reconfiguration process?

The reconfiguration process simply refers to GMW complying with its obligations under Part 7A of the Water Act 1989 (Vic) to reconfigure its own assets.

Put simply, reconfiguration starts with the preparation of a plan (consisting of a map and a listing of outlets) that shows the current configuration of GMW-owned assets on a channel or group of channels, and how it is proposed to reconfigure those assets.

At this point it is called a desktop concept reconfiguration plan.

Through consultation with you and with the benefit of local knowledge, the plan is refined. It then becomes the concept reconfiguration plan. It is important you understand that we may not always be able to accommodate specific changes to the proposed works, however we will work with you within the Project's Operational Rules.

When we've developed the plan to the point at which we're ready to formally consider and adopt the plan, it is called a draft final reconfiguration plan.

We have included an independent review process to give additional assurance to you that our decisions are in line with our Operational Rules (see <u>page 13</u> for more information on the independent review process).

After the plan is adopted, it is simply a reconfiguration plan.

Depending on the works proposed to the GMW assets that service your property and the level of acceptance from you and other landowners serviced by these assets, the Project may elect to follow an abbreviated reconfiguration process from the default process set out in this guide.

#### Desktop Concept Reconfiguration Plan

- You are provided with a copy of the desktop concept reconfiguration plan for the proposed works to GMW assets and, if required, a copy of the on-farm works design, and
- Our engagement with you will begin with a channel meeting, before we meet with you one-on-one.

#### Concept Reconfiguration Plan

- The desktop concept reconfiguration plan will be updated to the concept reconfiguration plan based on our engagement with you; and
- The concept on-farm works designs will be further refined based on the information we gather during activities such as survey or geotechnical investigators

## Draft Final Reconfiguration Plan

- The concept reconfiguration plan is reviewed and considered by the Project. If it meets with our requirements it will become the draft final reconfiguration plan;
- If you require a scope of on-farm works, this becomes a detailed design and is provided to you in a landowner agreement for on-farm works; and
- . You are provided with at least 30-days to make a submission on the works proposed by the project.

#### **Reconfiguration Plan**

- The Project will review the draft final plan again, along with any submissions recieved and associated recommendations from the Independent Reviewer; and
- . If there are no further changes required, the draft final plan becomes the reconfiguration plan.

## If I agree to the solution you proposed, do I have to go through the statutory reconfiguration process?

In most cases, the answer is yes, because we are dealing with multiple customers on the same channel and even if you agree to the proposed solution, other customers may not. However, there may be isolated cases where it is possible to progress works with a reconfiguration plan. This will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

#### Reaching agreement for on-farm works

Any works that are needed to connect your on-farm infrastructure to a reconfigured supply must be agreed by you.

We start with a concept on-farm works design. We then refine the design in consultation with you until it becomes a final on-farm works design.

Finally, if you agree to the proposed solution, a landowner agreement for on-farm works is the formal agreement document that we use to carry out any works to reconnect water supply.

We encourage landowners to engage actively with GMW in order to make arrangements for any necessary on-farm works to guarantee ongoing water supply.

It is in the best interests of landowners to make every effort to understand the potential impact of proposed reconfiguration works and what works might be necessary for continued access to GMW service.

#### **DESIGN SOLUTIONS**

All of our decisions for each channel start with gathering existing data and filling in any gaps. We get our information from many sources, including local area staff, local government and commercial enterprises.

We will look at a range of factors, such as how much water a channel loses through leakage and seepage, total water use and frequency of water use, channel condition and the type of enterprises that use water from the channel.

## Every channel will be treated in one of the following ways:

- Retain the channel and the existing outlets
- Retain and, as required, automate the channel and upgrade outlets
- Retain, remediate and automate the channel and upgrade outlets
- Decommission the channel and replace with a GMW pipeline
- Decommission the channel and replace with private infrastructure

#### **Key Point:**

In each of the above channel treatment options we will seek to rationalise the number of outlets in consultation with landowners

Where a channel is retained, we do not modernise meters that use less than 10ML/year unless an exception to the rule is approved as explained in our Guide to Operational Rules.

#### **FACTORS WE CONSIDER**

#### Value for money for water savings

A value for money decision is based on the project cost (\$) per megalitre (ML) of water savings. We have to achieve our water savings target, but not at any cost.

As a project progresses throughout the stages of statutory reconfiguration, we will know more about the cost of the project to assess the value for money.

In some cases, the cost of the project may not be justifiable when assessed against the water savings to be achieved. If a project is no longer going to offer a value for money outcome, then we may change our proposed solution, but we will continue to keep you updated as we progress.

#### Fit for purpose

A fit for purpose solution is one that is appropriate based on historic water use. We determine this based on your annual water use as explained in the Operational Rules (Refer Landowner Guide to WEP Operational Rules).

Our Operational Rules provide more information about the treatment of outlets including the following:

- Determining flow rates;
- Treatment of service points (rationalisation); and
- Criteria for exceptions.

You can find the Operational Rules Guide for Landowners on the GMW Water Efficiency Project's website: www.gmwater.com.au/WEP



#### ADDITIONAL OPTIONS FOR LANDOWNERS

#### **Property Consolidation**

Consolidating two or more properties sharing a common border into one large property allows land to be retained in productive irrigation with improved economies of scale in reconnecting the property.

Rationalisation of the water delivery network benefits the landowner and GMW, by reducing the quantity of service points or outlets, reducing whole of life costs, and maximising water savings for the Project.

The GMW Water Efficiency Project may provide fixed sum funding to consolidate on-farm infrastructure with the successful purchase of a property in agreed circumstances.

It is important to note that the Project will not actively seek out property consolidation opportunities – this must be initiated by the landowners. If you think that property consolidation may be an option (for example, your neighbour has expressed an interest in selling their land to you), we recommend you contact the Project to discuss your eligibility.

#### Co-contribution

During our engagement with you, you may advise that you intend to undertake additional on-farm works over and above the solution being proposed by the Project. This can include the proposed on-farm works or the works being proposed to GMW infrastructure.

We understand that you may want to expand or change your operations in the future, so we encourage you to think about co-contribution as a way to achieve this. By contributing funds to your connection, you may fund more or different infrastructure to what we propose, such as a bigger meter or higher flow rate (if the channels have capacity to do this).

Co-contribution is where you fund the difference in what we propose and what you want.

#### Voluntary dry-off.

You may want to decrease your water use, change to stock and domestic supply or remove all GMW service from your property.

In limited circumstances, landowners may be able to agree to the voluntary removal of GMW service in exchange for an incentive payment. The Project will then help facilitate the water administration associated with this outcome.

You will have an opportunity to discuss this with a project representative in the early stages of our engagement with you.



#### LANDOWNER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Our process for engaging with landowners is based on the following principles:

**Transparent:** we will be transparent in our decision making process and advise on the available solutions. You can also read about this in the Operational Rules Guide for Landowners;

**Adaptable:** we will use a range of methods to engage with landowners and clearly explain important concepts, such as reconfiguration and on-farm works designs; and

**Supportive:** we will provide you with information and guidance through the engagement process.

#### 1. GETTING STARTED

We start the process by sending you an introductory letter providing details of a group channel meeting and a project manager who will be your point of contact from start to finish. We will have already undertaken some preliminary planning on your channel or group of channels and are preparing to consult with you.





#### 2. CONCEPT PLANNING

We will host a group channel meeting and present the desktop concept reconfiguration plan for the channel which services your property.

#### What is a group channel meeting?

In the group meeting, we will explain what we are planning to do with the GMW water delivery system that services your property. This is in the form of a desktop concept reconfiguration plan.

After the meeting, we'll give you a copy of the desktop concept reconfiguration plan to take home. If you need onfarm works to reconnect to the GMW water delivery system, we'll also give you a desktop on-farm works design.

If you can't attend the meeting, we'll send you the desktop concept reconfiguration plan and concept on-farm work design and we'll also schedule a one-on-one meeting with you.

#### What is a concept on-farm works design?

A concept on-farm works design is our proposal for your on-farm irrigation infrastructure that you will need in order to reconnect to the reconfigured GMW water delivery system.

The concept on-farm works design will show what is proposed for your service points, and any other works needed such as remodelling of farm channels. It also outlines what will happen to your associated delivery share.

The first version is a concept only, based on the information we have. We will discuss and refine the concept design with you as engagement progresses.

#### 3. CONSULTING AND REFINING

In this step, we have individual conversations with you to refine the desktop reconfiguration plan that applies to the channel which services your property and, if applicable, the on-farm works design for your farm.

The meeting will be scheduled to occur shortly after the initial group meeting.

While your project manager is appointed from start to finish of the project, you will likely deal with a team member who specialises in this part of the engagement process (for example, one of the Project's engagement officers).

If your connection requires on-farm works, we will engage a farm designer to undertake the preliminary design of these works in consultation with you. This may include site visits, survey and/or geotechnical investigations.

#### **Preparation for this step**

With the plans in hand, you may want to think about:

- What input or changes you think should be made to the plans
- Whether you'd be prepared to co-contribute to your on-farm works and/or contribute to a larger meter size to allow for future farming plans – as we base our proposals on your historic water use, or
- If you want to reduce the number of outlets you have.
   This will also save you money on future service point fees.

#### **EXAMPLE**

#### **Outlet Rationalisation**

Nick owns a substantial parcel of land that he uses for mixed cropping. He has six outlets.

Nick intends to continue to use large quantities of water. There are two spur channels through his property that lose a great deal of water to leakage and seepage. By decommissioning these spur channels and removing four outlets, he can connect to a channel with the two remaining outlets, which would be replaced with modernised outlets.

Rationalising and upgrading meter outlets helps Nick because he will pay less Service Point Fees and the Project will achieve water savings.

#### Refining the plans

If we make changes to the desktop plans based on our consultation with you, we'll provide new copies of the plans showing the changes.

This may happen more than once, depending on the complexity of your connection.

Throughout this step, we'll refer to the plans as the concept reconfiguration plan and the concept on-farm works design.

#### **Key Point**

#### **Exceptional Circumstances**

We know that making big decisions about your business and property can be stressful, particularly if you are also dealing with other non-related issues or hardship.

If you are experiencing hardship that may make dealing with us difficult (such as bereavement or a significant health issue) we can make allowances in our timeline for you.

Please don't hesitate to speak with your project manager as early as possible so that we are aware of your circumstances.

#### 4. FORMALISING OUR PROPOSAL

In this step we go through a series of internal checks, to make sure the concept reconfiguration plan and on-farm works design accurately reflect our discussions with you. During this check we also ensure that the proposed works have been developed in accordance with our Operational Rules.

Once this internal check is complete, the concept reconfiguration plan becomes the draft final reconfiguration plan.

Ordinarily, it is at this point that we will present you with a formal offer. This will detail any on-farm works that we are proposing to undertake on your property in response to the reconfiguration of GMW assets or any other arrangement you have elected based on our Operational Rules. You will also receive a copy of the draft final reconfiguration plan for your consideration.

#### How we deal with your on-farm works

We take the concept on-farm works design from the previous steps and prepare a landowner agreement for onfarm works. This is a contract between you and GMW that enables us to construct your on-farm works. It sets out the legal obligations of each party, including any land dealings required for your connection.

Included with your landowner agreement for on-farm works will be a preliminary design.

We'll provide you with the draft final reconfiguration plan and two copies of your landowner agreement for on-farm works (with preliminary design).

#### 5. YOUR REVIEW

This is your opportunity to thoroughly review both the draft final reconfiguration plan and your landowner agreement for on-farm works.

#### **Key point**

- You will have 30-days to provide a submission on the draft final reconfiguration plan if you wish to make a submission.
- You will also be given a timeframe for reviewing the offer made to you in the landowner agreement.

#### Submissions on the draft final reconfiguration plan

In reviewing the draft final reconfiguration plan, you may want to ask yourself the following questions

- Is there anything I consider the GMW Water Efficiency Project has mistaken or failed to take into account in preparing the draft final reconfiguration plan?
- Do I need any more information to be provided to me?
- Do I want to make a submission?

#### Making a submission

Any person who might be affected by a draft final reconfiguration plan may make a submission as part of the statutory reconfiguration process.

#### How to make a submission:

#### Write to:

GMW Water Efficiency Project Submissions PO Box 1404 Shepparton VIC 3632

Email: WEP@gmwater.com.au

**Telephone:** 1300 163 006

## Reviewing your landowner agreement for on-farm works

Your landowner agreement for on-farm works sets out the on-farm works that we will carry out on your behalf to reconnect you to the reconfigured water delivery system.



## Can I make a submission on my on-farm works design?

Yes. The statutory reconfiguration process provides the opportunity for landowners to make submissions on the application of the Operational Rules in the on-farm works offer.

The Independent Reviewer is appointed and managed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and will provide a recommendation to the Project as to whether the Project has consistently applied Operational Rules in light of any landowner submission received.

#### What if I need professional advice?

The GMW Water Efficiency Project relies on its written agreements with landowners. It is important you understand what entering into an agreement with the Project means for you.

We encourage you seek independent professional advice if you have any questions about the form of the document. In order to assist, we will reimburse you up to \$1,000 to cover this expense.

In order to arrange for reimbursement of such costs, please give your project manager a copy of any invoice and proof of payment.

## If you agree with the landowner agreement for on-farm works

If you agree with the landowner agreement for on-farm works, please sign both copies and return them to us within the timeframe specified.

When a GMW authorised person has countersigned the agreement, we will return one copy to you for your records.

## If you don't agree with the landowner agreement for on-farm works

If you do not sign the agreement by the specified date or, despite past discussions and consultation to date, you don't agree with what we've proposed in the landowner agreement for on-farm works, you do not have to sign it.

If this is the case, there are some important things you need to know:

- You need to be able to carry out the works in a reasonable time so the project will not be delayed; and
- There may be a disruption to your water supply and interruption to your farm operations as a result of the Project undertaking works in accordance with the adopted reconfiguration plan
- You will be responsible for any on-farm works required to reconnect your property to GMW's service..

#### 6. OUR REVIEW

At the end of the 30-day period, the Project will review its proposal again to ensure it aligns with the Operational Rules and our discussions with you. If there are any submissions received during the 30-day period, these will be considered and, if required, referred to the Independent Reviewer.

Depending on the details of a submission made, the Project may be able to resolve any concerns raised with further engagement. Otherwise, the Project will refer these submissions for independent review. The Independent Reviewer will assess the submissions and provide recommendations to the Project.

Any recommendations made by the Independent Reviewer will be considered by the Project, before any decision is made to adopt a reconfiguration plan.

Where it is possible to address a specific landowner concern or request raised in response to a draft final reconfiguration plan, the Project may amend the plan before it is formally adopted as a reconfiguration plan.

#### **Independent Review**

An Independent Review process provides for an additional layer of assurance to landowners that our draft final reconfiguration plans are consistent with our Operational Rules.

The Independent Reviewer provides recommendations to the Project as to whether GMW's reconfiguration plan or proposed landowner agreement for on-farm works is consistent with the Project's Operational Rules and policies. The Independent Reviewer is appointed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP).

An Independent Review is carried out at no cost to the landowner.

Once completed, the Project will arrange for a copy of the Independent Reviewer's recommendations to be provided to the landowner.

#### 7. ADOPT THE PLAN

We can now formally adopt the draft final reconfiguration plan, which we now refer to as a reconfiguration plan.

On adoption, the draft final reconfiguration plan becomes a reconfiguration plan.

Notice of adoption of the reconfiguration plan is gazetted in the Victoria Government Gazette and the Project advises the Minister for Water that the reconfiguration plan has been adopted. The Project then provides a copy of the reconfiguration plan to all relevant landowners and interested parties.

## Final chance to sign your landowner agreement for on-farm works

If you haven't signed your landowner agreement for on-farm works once the draft final reconfiguration plan becomes the reconfiguration plan, we will contact you and provide you with one final opportunity to accept the offer made.

#### 8. CONSTRUCTION, COMMISSIONING AND HANDOVER

A reconfiguration plan provides all of the information required to prepare for construction so it is at this step that your project manager can give you an indicative timeline for works to take place.

As long as you have signed your landowner agreement for on-farm works, construction will likely be done at the same time as the reconfiguration of the GMW water delivery system.

#### **Timing of construction**

We understand that construction can impact on land use and commercial activities. Where possible we will work with you to schedule activities around your needs, or at least limit the impacts of our construction activities on your business.

## Who will carry out the construction works on my property?

The GMW Water Efficiency Project will engage a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to carry out construction works on your property.

Regardless of contracting method, all contractors – large and small – must comply with strict safety and quality standards at all times.

#### Commissioning

Commissioning is the final testing to ensure any assets or structures like meters, pipes and pumps are operating correctly. It also confirms that the on-farm works have been completed and are working in line with the design specifications.

Where it is possible, operational testing can take place during the construction phase.

#### Handover

Once we sign off on all commissioned assets, we will hand over any operational manuals and ensure you are trained in operating the new assets.

#### **Contact us**

GMW Efficiency Projects Team

**Phone:** 1300 163 006

Email: WEP@gmwater.com.au
Web: www.gmwater.com.au/WEP

Mail: PO Box 1404, Shepparton VIC 3632