



Media release

Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
The Honourable Dr Anthony Lynham

Emerald locals take charge of water

Water management and its allocation for the Emerald region is now in the hands of those who know it best – Emerald locals.

But they won't be going it alone.

Natural Resources Minister Dr Anthony Lynham said the Palaszczuk Queensland Government was providing local authorities with \$2.5 million to operate Emerald's irrigation channels down-stream from Fairbairn Dam.

"Following years of consultation and collaborative work, as of today, Emerald's irrigators and agricultural industry now have full control of their local channel irrigation scheme, including its pump stations, 126 kilometres of channels, pipeline and weir infrastructure," Dr Lynham said.

"Local company Fairbairn Irrigation Network Limited will be responsible for distributing 86,000 megalitres of water to around 150 customers – supporting a wide variety of agriculture in the Emerald region such as cotton, citrus, cereals, pecans and grapes.

"The Fairbairn Irrigation Network has a board of local irrigators and independent directors all of whom have a direct interest in the region's water being put to its best possible use."

Fairbairn Irrigation Network Chair Anne Marie O'Callaghan said Emerald customers were overwhelmingly in favour of the water scheme being managed locally.

"Our irrigators and customers can now focus on the future of the Emerald scheme, take responsibility for its ongoing sustainability and efficiency, determine service levels and manage the scheme costs and distribution prices," Ms O'Callaghan said.

"We're working towards a scheme that is tailored and responsive to the needs of our customers, that will see surplus revenues reinvested in scheme assets, and deliver the best outcomes in water distribution and service for the community.

"I would like to sincerely thank the many people in government, SunWater staff, our transition project team, the Fairbairn Irrigation Network board members, our customers and the local community, for supporting this process over the past six years."

SunWater Chief Executive Officer Nicole Hollows said eight former SunWater staff would continue to operate and maintain the scheme's channel distribution assets for the Fairbairn Irrigation Network, as part of the handover.

"SunWater understands the important contribution of Emerald and the Central Highlands region to the state's economy and we will continue to manage the Nogoia Mackenzie Bulk Water Supply Scheme, including Fairbairn Dam and the surrounding weirs, working closely with customers to support their ongoing needs," she said.

Irrigators in Eton also are negotiating for the transfer of their water assets to local management.

For more on Local Management Arrangements (LMA) for SunWater's irrigation channels, visit: www.lmairrigation.com.au (external site) (<http://www.lmairrigation.com.au/>)

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