Rural Water Efficiency Project

Project update - September 2025

Coliban WATER

Modernising our rural network

We're continuing to progress the Rural Water Efficiency Project, which aims to modernise water infrastructure across the rural network in the Greater Bendigo region.

In 2024, we asked you what you wanted from the new rural system. Our project team and technical experts are now using your feedback to explore different options for a system that is efficient and fit for purpose.

In March 2025, we submitted a funding application to the Australian Government's Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program. If our bid is successful, we will know how much funding support we will receive and can progress project design, detailed costing and planning approvals.

Currently, we're using customer input and future water needs to develop detailed project designs and costings. This update takes a look at what's happening now, what's coming next, and what to expect moving forward if we secure project funding.

A tough, dry season ahead - A reminder why we need this project

For now, we have paused our planned engagement on this project while we wait for news on our funding application under the Australian Government's Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program. This pause also provides customers with the space to focus on managing the current dry conditions. We know current lower allocations are tough and that this isn't a typical season for most of our customers.

However, these dry conditions are a stark reminder of why this project is vital to our region's long-term water resilience. With water more precious than ever, we must make every drop count.

By upgrading ageing infrastructure and reducing losses, we can improve water efficiency across the system, not just for today, but for the years ahead and the dry conditions they may bring.

While we can't do anything about the amount of rainfall we receive, we *can* do something about how efficiently our infrastructure delivers water to our customers.

This project won't remove the immediate pressures of dry conditions. But it is one of the most effective ways to help secure a future where every drop goes further for more people, in more seasons.

The case for change

Our rural supply system is ageing, inefficient and increasingly less fit for purpose. This affects not only rural users, but also the region's overall water security.

Only

20%

of water that enters the system is available for use by customers, the rest is lost via seepage & evaporation.

4,000

megalitres

of water is lost though the system annually – enough to supply 20,000 households.

Only

43%

of water entitlements have been used by rural customers, on average over the past five years.

1300 363 200 | coliban.com.au
37-45 Bridge Street | BENDIGO | VIC 3550



September 2022
Rural Customer Survey Informs Early Planning

We surveyed rural customers about their current and future water use. Their insights helped shape our bid for funding to develop detailed project design.

August 2023
Secured $3.7M to Design the Project

Our bid was successful. We received $3.7 million from the Australian Government to develop detailed designs (including engineering, customer needs & costs).

March-April 2024
Stage 1 – Customer Feedback on Future Needs

We sent information packs and a short questionnaire asking rural customers how they use the system now and what they're planning for the future. Their feedback is guiding our design.

September-October 2024
Stage 2A – Exploring Volume Reductions

We spoke with customers about any surplus water they hold and whether they'd consider reducing their licence volumes with the right incentives.

We are here!

Stage 2B – Developing System Options
CURRENT PHASE

We're using customer input and future capacity needs to develop system design options and costings. We're keeping customers in the loop as we go.

Funding Decision from Government
PENDING

The Government will either approve, negotiate, or decline funding based on our Funding Application.

If Approved: Customer Engagement Continues 2026

If funding is secured, we'll roll out new info packs and hold in-person sessions to walk rural customers through the next steps and their potential options.

Leaving the system in its current state is not an option.

The current rural system is unsustainable - wasting water, limiting service reliability, and costing more to maintain each year.

In the face of climate change, ageing infrastructure, and growing pressure on water resources, we must act now so we're not forced into difficult decisions in a dry future.

Answering your questions

Through our earlier surveys and engagement with you, we know rural customers have a lot of questions about the future system. Currently, we don't have all the answers. Until we know the outcome of funding and how much government support the project might receive, we don't have a final project design.

We know how important your questions are, and we're committed to being upfront, to listen, and to do our part to make the system as fair and efficient as possible. Although the specifics of the rollout aren't yet locked in, we can share general insights from similar water efficiency projects to help you plan and prepare.

To find out more about water efficiency projects in Regional Victoria, head to the Connect Coliban project page to check out the **Water Efficiency Projects in Victoria** summary, along with updated **FAQs** that reflect the latest decisions and thinking behind the project.

What's coming up?

The next time you hear from us will likely be with an update on the Australian Government's funding decision for the project. If our bid is successful, we'll have new information to share. Once we have established a full project team, we will be in contact about next steps. This will mark the start of more in-depth engagement with you, and we'll be asking for your input on key aspects of the project.

Stay Connected

Have questions or want to learn more about a project? Email us at coliban@coliban.com.au or follow the project on Connect Coliban: connect.coliban.com.au/rural-water-efficiency

