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BROKEN IRRIGATOR GROUP PROPOSAL ON MOKOAN FLAWED

A Broken Irrigator Group proposal to partition Lake Mokoan was flawed and likely to cost more than decommissioning, the Department of Sustainability and Environment's Office of Water General Manager David Downie said today.

Confirming the Government's commitment to continue with decommissioning, he said partitioning the inefficient storage would also lessen water savings.

"We undertook expert, independent analysis of this latest proposal and reviewed it very seriously," Mr Downie said.

"The proposal, supported by Murrumbidgee Irrigation, just doesn't deliver cost savings or the required water savings."

Mr Downie said four partitioning options for the lake were considered when the decision was made in 2004 to return Victoria's most inefficient water storage to a natural wetland.

He said that while there was a belief by irrigators that partitioning would guarantee reliability for farmers, what had been overlooked was that such a scheme would impose unaffordable costs on Broken system farmers and would still not deliver a higher reliability.

"Another key problem with the partitioning option would be significantly lower water savings. It will only achieve water savings of 16 gigalitres – not the 44 gigalitres that is claimed," Mr Downie said.

Mr Downie said the Murrumbidgee Irrigation design and costing was flawed because it does not account for the very different conditions and requirements for Mokoan, compared with those at Barren Box Swamp. He stressed the proposal would more likely result in a cost blow-out rather than any savings.

Mr Downie thanked the Broken irrigators for their proposal, but said the Government's decommissioning plan would proceed.

"We want to achieve a world class wetland at the site and contribute to the health of the Snowy and Murray Rivers," Mr Downie said.

"There has been a great deal of community interest in the Future Land Use Study and I welcome community involvement as we move forward with converting the lake into a wetland and developing this new community asset."

The Lake Mokoan Project is funded through the Victorian Government's *Our Water Our Future* action plan to secure the state's water future.

The project will generate 48,000 megalitres of water annually for environmental flows in the Snowy and Murray Rivers.