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## **BROKEN IRRIGATORS TO ADVISE ON LAKE MOKOAN OFFSETS**

The new Lake Mokoan irrigation advisory committee would be closely involved in developing offset measures for the decommissioning of the Lake, Water Minister John Thwaites said today.

Mr Thwaites said the Lake Mokoan Irrigator Reliability Advisory Committee - now formally established by Goulburn-Murray Water - would play an important role in providing advice to government before a decision to proceed with offset measures ahead of the full decommissioning.

“The committee was set up to actively work through the proposed off set measures required to maintain existing reliability of supply for irrigators on the Broken system,” Mr Thwaites said.

“In doing so the Government has agreed to consult with irrigators, who have also offered to propose alternative cost effective offsets to maximise reliability.

“The committee - which recently held its first meeting – will advise on all future offset measures.”

Mr Thwaites said the Government stood by its decision to buy a property in the Broken Basin with a 1000 ML water entitlement to boost environmental water supplies and irrigator reliability.

“This was a rare opportunity to secure 1000 ML of active entitlement - less than 3% of the system’s entitlement - where permanent water trade is scarce,” Mr Thwaites said.

“It was a cost effective purchase and the land, which was in poor condition, was brought from a willing seller after being passed in at auction and being on the market for many months.”

Mr Thwaites said other proposals being investigated included piping of the Tungamah domestic and stock system.

He said the Government had adopted a multi-faceted approach to securing offsets, but with an overwhelming emphasis on infrastructure and water efficiency projects.

“In the *Our Water Our Future* strategic plan released last year, the Government said it would purchase water where such purchases were the most efficient and appropriate means of recovering water,” he said.

“The plan says recovering water for the environment will be achieved through the most effective combination of investing in infrastructure, reuse and recycling, reconfiguring irrigation systems and purchasing water through the water market.

“Our first preference will be to continue to seek secure cost effective infrastructure projects, but this purchase will help meet the Bracks Government’s environmental commitments and our commitments to irrigators and the Mokoan community prior to decommissioning the Lake.”

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