



MEDIA RELEASE

Drought funding helps to future-proof region

The Committee for Gippsland (C4G) has welcomed Prime Minister Scott Morrison's commitment of \$31 million to help "drought-proof" the region.

Sunday's announcement of \$31 million for the Macalister Irrigation District (MID) Phase 2 Project and \$2.5 million in funding for mental health support follows last week's commitment of \$13 million from the State Government.

Mr Morrison saw first-hand the plight of Gippsland farmers when he visited the area with Gippsland MHR, Darren Chester.

C4G Chief Executive Officer, Sophie Morell, welcomed the visit and the financial support to provide both long-term and short-term relief.

The \$31 million from the Federal Government will enable the MID Phase 2 Project to be completed in late 2022. The Victorian Government and Southern Rural Water have already committed \$31 million to the project which will "future proof" East Gippsland's agricultural land.

"Our farmers are experiencing the worst drought conditions for many years and while we can't make it rain, we can assist in protecting our region in the future while providing some short-term financial help," Ms Morell said.

"The benefits from the MID project are significant and the impact will be felt across our region, providing opportunities for farmers to diversify and add value to their businesses."

Ms Morell said some anticipated benefits from the project included:

- Saving and reinvesting up to 10GL of water back into the Gippsland rural economy;
- Boosting Gippsland's output of milk and food;
- Securing Newry's supply network for 40 plus years;
- Unlocking on-farm investment in irrigation and grow farm productivity; and
- Improving environmental outcomes by reducing nutrient discharges to local waterways and the Gippsland Lakes.

"Importantly, the project will lead to improvements for farmers, their families and employees," Ms Morell said.

"Our farming sector in Gippsland contributes \$15.362 billion to Victoria's Gross State Product of which \$3.01 billion comes from agriculture. The sector directly employs 9995 people in the region."

Ms Morell congratulated both the federal and state governments for acknowledging that Gippsland needed support during this long period of dry.



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“Last week, the One Gippsland delegation advocated for Gippsland with Australia’s leaders in Canberra with the MID project listed as a high priority. We will continue our efforts, especially for our agricultural sector in these difficult times.”

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For further information, call Sophie Morell on 0488 557 798 or email sophie.morell@gipps.com.au



From L-R

Sophie Morell - C4G CEO

Darren Chester - Member for Gippsland

Alison Leighton - Baw Baw Shire Council CEO and GLGN Representative

Mikaela Power - Baw Baw Shire Council Mayor and GLGN Chair

Michael McCormack MP - Deputy Prime Minister

Toni Wakefield - C4G Board Chair

Paul Welfare - RDA Gippsland Representative