

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

Jim Wall, Wee Waa

April 2014

Location: 'Athelstone', 8 km east of Wee Waa near the Namoi River

Water sources: Namoi regulated general security entitlement

Soil type: Alluvial soils ranging to lighter red loams

Enterprise: Cotton, grains and cattle

Existing irrigation system: Furrow irrigation

Total area irrigated: 500 ha

Total savings: 263 ML with 73% to be returned to the environment.

The Wall family came to 'Athelstone' near Wee Waa in 1878.

Jim Wall is the fifth generation and says that his family are here for the long term.

The Walls are 'generational' farmers that are focussed on increasing their business returns rather than just the land value.

Jim's father, Philip Wall, was a grazier in his earlier life but started growing cotton in 1964.

Description of the project

The Walls have been successful in both rounds of STBIFM.

The Round 1 project included:

- The construction of a new 730 ML above-ground storage
- The installation of a new pump station
- Earthworks and pipe installation

This storage allows the Walls to utilise a high flow licence and capture overland flow and tail water returns.

The Round 2 project complemented their first round project and included:

- A swing around lateral move irrigation system covering 180 ha.

"We have identified significant savings with the infrastructure change but the real value for us is the improvement in our water security."



Jim Wall with his new lateral move irrigator funded in Round two of STBIFM. Image: S. Bray

The benefits of the project

Jim Wall said the big advantage of the new system is that it can match water applications to crop needs and minimise deep drainage and other losses.

"This allows us to make the most of opportunity crops like mung beans which require only a couple of irrigations in a normal summer season.

"The returns from mung beans can be quite high because, with irrigation, they can yield up to 2 tonnes per hectare," Mr Wall said.

Landholders experience

Mr Wall said his involvement in the STBIFM had been a good experience.

"The roll out of the project has been very well organised and overall it's been quite straight forward

"I totally agree with the competitive tender process.

"If I was doing on-farm works I would also be trying to get value for money.

"I deliberated a long time on the information provided by DPI and the value of my water and just focussed on what provided value to my irrigation business," Mr Wall said.

What aspect was most challenging?

As with a number of successful projects from Round 1, wet weather delayed the earth works early on in the development of the on-farm storage.

However, despite this set back, when the season changed, the project was completed on time and within budget.

The Round 2 project is also progressing well and is tracking on-time.

What advice would you give others?

Mr Wall said he'd advise other irrigators not to think of participating in the STBIFM as giving up water.

"It's about increasing the bottom line through efficiencies.



Jim Wall at his new pump site. Image: S. Bray

"My on-farm water use efficiency assessment and Irrigation Consultant were also a really big help in making good decisions.

"They helped me to really be able to value the water and know how to develop a competitive bid," Mr Wall said.

What are your thoughts on STBIFM?

Jim Wall said that the STBIFM funding provided a valuable opportunity for their irrigation enterprise.

"We have identified significant savings with the change but the real value for us is the improvement in our water security.

"This is a way of achieving long term goals in a shorter time frame," Mr Wall said.

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