

# Applications open for irrigation incentives

SUNRAYSIA-based irrigators are being encouraged to apply for funds as part of the latest round of irrigation incentives to improve on-farm efficiency.

Incentives of up to \$900 for an irrigation system check are available, with incentives up to \$30,000 also available to upgrade irrigation infrastructure on farms over an area greater than 40 hectares.

Funding is being made available as part of the Victorian Mallee Irrigation Incentives Program.

Funds will be delivered by the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), through funding from the Victorian Government.

Mallee CMA manager Irrigation and Salinity, Deidre Jaensch, said the incentives program was aimed at encouraging best practice in irrigation.

"There are a wide range of on-farm infrastructure improvements that are eligible because they target water-use efficiency," he said. "For example, evaluations to check and measure the performance of irrigation systems are eligible, as are the development of irrigation and drainage management plans to help growers determine plant root zone depth and optimal water application."

Assistance and advice for irrigators on their eligibility is available by contacting DEDJTR Irrigation Extension Officer Maxine Schache on 5051 4500, or by visiting the Mallee CMA website; [www.malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au) (click on the 'Grants and Incentives' link).

All applications must be lodged by 4pm on November 28.



• **INSIGHTS:** More than 40 Mallee-based farmers have taken part in Australian Vermiculture's annual crop walk event, which aimed to highlight the benefits of organic/biological fertiliser use. Participants visited two local properties as part of the event, while being treated to insights from leading soil scientist Dr Ash Martin, PICTURED.

# Mallee farmers in vermiculture 'show and tell'

MORE than 40 Mallee-based farmers have taken part in an annual crop walk organised by Mildura-based producer of organic/biological fertilisers, Australian Vermiculture.

Growers in attendance included those from the Sunraysia Local Food Future group, with Year 11 students from Werrimull P-12 School also taking part.

Leading Australian soil scientist, Dr Ash Martin from Microbiology Laboratories Australia, conducted the walk, which included a trip to two local properties.

The first was based in Yararra,

Victoria, with owner, Robert 'Buff' Matthews, highlighting his paddock's "re-birth" over the past three years.

"This is my best crop ever," he said. "If anyone saw this paddock three years ago, and then saw it today, they wouldn't have believed it was possible."

According to Dr Martin, the diversity of the biology in Australian Vermiculture's 'ProGro' product, especially its high nutrient concentration, had helped bring immediate effect to establishing soil productivity at Buff's property.

The group next visited the

Werrimull-based property of Don and Carolyn Rankin, where they had the chance to view a soil pit highlighting soil improvements during a seven year period without the use of synthetic fertilisers.

Dr Martin was able to highlight a humic layer that had developed below ground that provides a rich food source for crops.

"It is particularly rare to find this occurring from today's farming practices," he told those in attendance. "To see it in the harsh environs of the Mallee speaks volumes about the health of Don and Carolyn's soil."

Founder of Australian Ver-

miculture, Brendon Price, said it was great to see horticulture and viticulture farmers at this year's broadacre crop walk.

"The local farmers are starting to really understand the value of improving their soils and how well our products perform in that regard," he said.

Australian Vermiculture was founded in Broken Hill in 1997, and has grown thanks to the success of the group's bio-organic fertiliser products.

Located in Mildura, production facilities have been extended to a second site at Mt Compass just south of Adelaide.



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