

By Sally Gall

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HIPCo secures ongoing government funding



📷 HIPCo will be undertaking a review of its cropping strategy and investor update with the funding guarantee it's been given. Picture by Sally Gall.

Although its tender for water was terminated in April, the Hughenden Irrigation Project Corporation has secured state government funding for the next three years.

The reason for the termination was said to be due to the government's decision to bring forward a review of the Gulf Water Plan, including a \$4 million Regional Water Assessment, which HIPCo chair Jeff Reid said at the time was frustrating but not surprising.

"The Minister's own report on the health of the Gulf Water Plan stated that it required review, as it was not delivering outcomes for irrigated agriculture and critical minerals in the Flinders region," he said.

The decision is [delaying HIPCo's water project](#), as it has no path to water, but Mr Reid said they also saw positives as the planning instruments were finally aligning to allow a project of regionally significant size to be constructed.

"Since the government announcements, HIPCo has had many discussions at many levels of government to ensure our knowledge and learnings are not lost," he said.

"We are very pleased to announce that our efforts have resulted in HIPCo securing funding for the next three years to work alongside the government as they reassess the Gulf Water Plan and

complete the Regional Water Assessment, to better enable projects such as irrigated agriculture and critical minerals development in the region.

"The government has expressed high confidence and value in the work done by the HIPCo team and has provided us with funding to keep our knowledge accessible and current and have practical input into the options under consideration."

Mr Reid said that while that work continued, their preferred project was only on hold, not dead.

Key milestones of HIPCo's new work program over the next three years include undertaking options assessments, looking at other water supply projects in the region, engineering studies for shortlisted options, sustainability and cultural updates, and a review of the cropping strategy and investor update.

"As the outcomes of the Gulf Water Plan review and Regional Water Assessment become available, we will update our business case to ensure alignment and make sure the best projects are then taken to the next stage of construction," Mr Reid said.

"This major development demonstrates that not-for-profit HIPCo is alive, respected, and working with all levels of government to get the best outcomes possible from the Gulf Water Plan review.

"We are optimistic that the next version of the Gulf Water Plan will allow many more options and deliverable sustainable water projects for the benefit of the region and the stakeholders."

Mr Reid also said water projects were complicated and took a long time to bring to fruition, and were best done through expert guidance, collaboration and cooperation, and most importantly determination.

"We have all these elements in place now," he said.

HIPCo announced last week that it had [signed a Memorandum of Understanding](#) with the Flinders Shire Council on collaborative water harvesting undertakings, and hoped that more shires would come on board so that a united front could be presented to the government for funding requests.