

NSW SUSTAINING THE BASIN *Irrigated farm modernisation*

When BIG is not always better

February 2014

Name: Barry and Lyn Parton

Location: Tamworth

Water Sources: Peel Regulated Water Entitlement

Total water savings: 70 ML with 79% returned to the environment.

On the outskirts of Tamworth on the way to Attunga, is a little two span pivot close to the road.

Barry Parton and his wife Lyn purchased the pivot as part of the NSW Sustaining the Basin: Irrigated Farm Modernisation Project (STBIFM).

Cease-to-pump rules mean that in the recent drought conditions large lucerne producing areas, like the adjacent Cockburn Valley, which normally supplies around 150,000 bales during the summer, has little water for irrigation and can't supply a market hungry for hay.

Barry says that he has received many humorous comments about the size of his pivot compared to other larger pivots in the Tamworth lucerne growing area.

"However, as the hot summer continues to set heat and evapotranspiration records, the little pivot is more than holding its own.

"The two span 'Minigator', covers 3.3 ha, but because it's a small area I can slow it down and apply more water over fewer days.

Mr Parton applies 70mm per pass. As he only irrigates for 16 hours overnight, it takes him four nights to irrigate the circle: a quarter a night.

After four weeks Mr Parton cuts around 400 bales of winter active Wrighton 925 lucerne.

"The trucks follow me eagerly around the paddock as I am baling, they love the little pivot." Mr Parton said.



Barry Parton and his lucerne crop under the little pivot in February 2014. Image: S. Bray

Other larger pivots are struggling to maintain the water supply flow rates necessary to apply the volume of water needed to irrigate a larger area.

Barry Parton's little pivot looks like having a payback period of a little over a year and that has put a smile on its owners face!

This project is funded by the Australian Government's 'Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure' Program.

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