



MEDIA RELEASE

Phil Koperberg

NSW Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water

MORE WATER FOR VALLEYS BUT NO END IN SIGHT FOR DROUGHT

State Plan Priority E1: A secure and sustainable water supply for all users

Friday 2nd November 2007

Minister for Climate Change, Environment and Water Phil Koperberg today said more water for the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys would be made available but warned the drought could get worse.

Minister Koperberg told a meeting of intensive livestock producers in Griffith the traditionally wet months of September and October had passed with little rain.

"Inflows are well below the long-term average in most areas of NSW and with warmer, drier months approaching we must start planning ahead," he said.

"Together with local councils and industry, the lemma Government will continue to do all it can to keep water flowing to drought stricken NSW communities."

Minister Koperberg announced:

- **An increase for high security allocations in the Murrumbidgee Valley from 75 per cent to 80 per cent; and**
- **A further 10 per cent of suspended account water from 2006 in the Murray Valley will now be re-credited, bringing total repayments to 45 per cent.**

"This increase will provide high security users in the Murrumbidgee with enough water for horticultural production and support the needs of intensive livestock and forestry industries until July 2008," he said.

"Enough water is available in the Murray to allow the contingency watering program to run till March 2008 but a number of creeks still do not have ongoing access to domestic and stock water, so tributary flows will be directed to these as a priority."

Mr Koperberg said while the extra water was some good news for the region the outlook for next year was grim.

"Inflows have been well below the average and if the drought continues we cannot guarantee that we will have enough water to meet all needs after June 2008.

"We need significant rainfall over the coming months to turn this situation around and hopefully that will happen, but there are no guarantees with the weather.

“I have asked all intensive livestock producers in the Murray and Murrumbidgee to assess what impact critically low water will have on their future viability. Given long lead times it would be prudent to start considering their options now.

“I feel for families doing it tough through this severe drought.”

The lemma Government has invested \$300 million on a range of assistance measures to assist struggling families and rural communities including:

- **Waiving the fixed water charges in 2006/07 for general security irrigators in the Lachlan Valley due to the prolonged and severe impact of the drought in that Valley;**
- **\$20 million extraordinary assistance package to help southern irrigators cope with reduced water allocations; and**
- **Emergency household support, mental health services, transport subsidies and assistance for small businesses.**

Minister Koperberg said water availability across NSW was continually monitored by the Department of Water and Energy.

More information will be available in the Department of Water and Energy's critical water planning communiqué due for release on 15 November. All the communiqués issued by the Department are available online at www.naturalresources.nsw.gov.au
