



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

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NEW CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT ON THE MURRUMBIDGEE REGION

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today welcomed the release of a report on the effects of climate change on water availability in the Murrumbidgee region in southern New South Wales.

The report forms part of the *CSIRO Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields* project, being undertaken on behalf of the Australian Government and the Murray-Darling Basin states. The project looks at the impacts of climate change and land use change across the Basin's 18 regions.

"The Rudd Government is tackling the effects of climate change through measures including our \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* plan," Senator Wong said.

"*Water for the Future* sets out four main priorities: securing our water supplies, using water wisely, tackling climate change and supporting healthy rivers.

"The *Sustainable Yields* reports will be important in developing a new and sustainable diversion limit for the Murray Darling Basin to help achieve on these priorities.

"The report released today on the Murrumbidgee region demonstrates the effects of climate change on our water supplies and highlights the need to use water wisely."

About 500,000 people live in the Murrumbidgee catchment, which includes Canberra. About 426,400 ha were irrigated in 2000 for cereals (including rice), pasture, hay production, grapes and citrus.

The region includes 33 nationally significant wetlands including the Mid-Murrumbidgee Wetlands and Lowbidgee Floodplain. Water resource development has substantially increased the average period between flood events and reduced annual flood volumes in these wetland systems.

The report found:

- The current permitted levels of surface water use are extremely high relative to water availability, with 53 per cent of the available surface water allowed for use.
- Groundwater accounts for around 17 per cent of total water use and is expected to increase to 21 per cent by 2030.

CSIRO's median (or 'best estimate') of climate change by 2030 indicates that, compared to historic climate and given current water sharing arrangements:

- Average surface water availability would be reduced by 9 per cent.
- Surface water diversions would be reduced by 2 per cent.
- Flows from the Murrumbidgee into the Murray River would decline by 17 per cent.

More information about the *CSIRO Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields* project can be found at www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/yields.html