



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

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CONSULTATION TIME EXTENDED ON ACCC RURAL WATER RULES

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today announced a revised timeline for developing the water market and water charge rules for the Murray-Darling Basin to allow more stakeholder input.

Under the *Water Act 2007*, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has the task of advising the Minister on draft rules to give farmers flexibility to trade their water access rights and help ensure more efficient and sustainable water use across the Murray-Darling Basin.

“Since April 2008, the ACCC has been conducting formal consultations on both the water market and water charge rules. Along the way, stakeholders have indicated that they want more time to consider the draft rules,” Senator Wong said.

“In response to this feedback and at the request of the ACCC, I have decided to extend the deadline for the ACCC to provide its advice to the Australian Government to allow more time for stakeholder consultation.”

As a result of this extension, the ACCC will include an additional stage to consult with stakeholders on the water charge and water market rules.

The extra stage will give stakeholders four to six weeks to comment on a position paper that outlines the ACCC’s early policy position on key issues with respect to the draft rules.

“The ACCC will now adopt a three stage process, consulting on an issues paper, a position paper, and then a draft report and rules, before providing its final advice on the rules to the Australian Government.

“Stakeholders will have a chance to provide feedback on every stage of the process ahead of the ACCC finalising its advice.”

As a result of today’s extension, the ACCC’s advice to the Australian Government on the water market rules and the water charge rules will be provided in December 2008 and June 2009 respectively.

“The ACCC’s consultation process will be critical in informing future arrangements in the Murray-Darling Basin and I strongly urge all stakeholders to participate,” Senator Wong said.

“More efficient water markets are important an element in the Rudd Government’s *Water for the Future* plan, which has four priorities: tackling climate change, using water wisely, supporting healthy rivers and securing our water supplies.”

For further information on the ACCC’s timelines for consultation, visit the ACCC’s website at www.accc.gov.au and sign up for email updates.