



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

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WATER PURCHASE EXPANDS TO SOUTHERN BASIN

The health of the River Murray and of a number of internationally-recognised wetlands will benefit from the next tender to purchase water entitlements in the southern Murray-Darling Basin.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said the southern Basin tender would start on 7 October and would be open to willing sellers of water entitlements.

“This expansion follows the announcement of the northern Basin tender in early September and will provide water to protect and restore southern Basin river systems and wetlands,” Senator Wong said.

“Water purchased for the southern Basin will boost the overall health of rivers and wetlands that are extremely stressed after years of over-allocation, drought and climate change.

“It will also provide environmental benefits to Ramsar-listed wetlands along the River Murray such as the Lower Lakes, Coorong, Chowilla floodplain near Renmark, and the Barmah Millewa Forest near Echuca.

“This tender will be informed by feedback provided by a Stakeholder Consultative Committee on the first-ever direct Federal Government water purchase tender held earlier this year.”

The southern Basin buyback will be open to willing sellers of water entitlements from the South Australian and Victorian Murray-Darling Basin, as well as the Murray, Murrumbidgee, Lachlan and Lower Darling rivers in New South Wales.

Purchases made in South Australia will go towards achieving the \$80 million of water buyback in South Australia announced by the Prime Minister on 14 August.

Through *Water for the Future*, the Australian Government has committed a total of \$3.1 billion to buying back water entitlements to give Murray-Darling Basin rivers and wetlands a greater share of water when it becomes available.

In addition to the northern Basin tender, the new southern Basin tender builds on other initiatives to return water to the Basin’s rivers and wetlands including:

- A program providing special exit payments to assist eligible small scale irrigators who want to exit the irrigation industry but stay on their farms. (More details to be announced in coming weeks);
- Working with irrigation communities to buy out water entitlements from areas willing to move out of irrigation, facilitated by a price premium reflecting the value of water savings from closure of infrastructure such as supply channels;
- Working with State Governments to co-fund the purchase of appropriately located irrigation properties and their water entitlements to enhance environmental outcomes in the northern Basin.

The southern Basin tender will begin on Tuesday 7 October, and run until the end of the financial year. The outcomes will be made available on the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website once trades are completed.

Detailed program guidelines will be available from Tuesday 7 October at www.environment.gov.au/water or by calling 1800 218 478.