



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW 141/09

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SMALL BLOCK IRRIGATORS EXIT GRANT DEADLINE APPROACHING

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today reminded irrigators interested in applying for the Small Block Irrigators Exit Grant Package that it closes at the end of this month.

“The current extended drought, combined with the global financial crisis, is making it tough for some irrigators on small blocks to remain viable,” Senator Wong said.

“This program aims to help small block irrigators exit the irrigation industry while remaining in their own homes and communities, at the same time as returning water to stressed rivers and wetlands.

“The program is one element in our 10-year, \$12.9 billion Water for the Future plan to secure our water supplies, take action on climate change, use water wisely and support healthy rivers.”

Senator Wong said that while there had been strong interest in the package to date, some eligible irrigators may have not yet made up their minds about whether to apply.

“I urge all interested irrigators to get their applications in soon to meet the 30 June deadline.”

Senator Wong said there had been considerable interest in the package, with 163 applicants so far deemed eligible. To access the grants, eligible irrigators must successfully lodge an application to sell water entitlements to the Australian Government through its Basin water buyback program.

The Small Block Irrigators Exit Grant offers up to \$150,000 as a special payment to eligible irrigators in the Murray-Darling Basin where:

- on 20 September 2008, they owned up to 15 hectares of farm land and at least 10 megalitres of tradeable water entitlements; or
- on 13 February 2009, they owned more than 15 hectares and up to 40 hectares of farmland and at least 10 megalitres of tradeable water entitlements.

Interested irrigators are advised to contact Centrelink as soon as possible on 1800 050 015 and lodge a pre-assessment. Lodging a pre-assessment allows Centrelink to confirm an irrigator’s eligibility for the package and provide advice on potential exit grant payments.

To access the Small Block Irrigators Exit Grant Package, irrigators must lodge an application with Centrelink by 30 June 2009. An application to sell water entitlements to the Australian Government through the Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin water tender process must also be lodged by 30 June 2009.

For more information on selling water entitlements to the Australian Government, visit www.environment.gov.au/water or call 1800 218 478.