



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

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PROPOSALS INVITED FOR \$300 MILLION ON-FARM IRRIGATION EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

The Rudd Government is calling for proposals for a new \$300 million on-farm irrigation efficiency grants program to help deliver a long-term sustainable future for Murray-Darling Basin irrigation communities.

Releasing the program guidelines today, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said the funding would help irrigation communities adjust to a future with less water by supporting farmers investing in water-saving irrigation practices and technology.

“The Rudd Government is getting on with the job of preparing for a future with less rain because of climate change,” Senator Wong said.

“Central to our plan to get the Murray-Darling Basin back onto a sustainable footing is a strong and vibrant future for our irrigation communities.

“We are investing in irrigation infrastructure to help our farmers and regional communities and protect food security.”

Senator Wong said the On-Farm Irrigation Infrastructure Program was open to irrigators in the Southern Basin and the Lachlan River catchment.

The new program invites competitive bids to deliver cost-effective ‘tranches’ of on-farm investment from partners such as irrigation water providers, peak-industry groups and catchment management authorities.

The program has been modelled on the arrangements trialled through the *On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency (Pilot Projects)* program. It will invest in more efficient irrigation systems in areas where a long-term economic and environmental benefit can be demonstrated.

The projects must help secure a long-term sustainable future for irrigation communities; deliver substantial and lasting returns of water to the environment to secure real improvements in river health; and deliver value for money.

The \$300 million in funding comes from the \$5.8 billion *Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure* program, a key plank of the Government’s 10-year, \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* plan. Funding starts in 2009-10 and continues until 2013.

More information on this program and *Water for the Future* is available at:

www.environment.gov.au.