



THE HON. DR MIKE KELLY AM, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Water

Monday, 19 October 2009

MK12/2009

Helping to secure Australia's groundwater future

The Parliamentary Secretary for Water, the Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP, today announced \$2.1 million in funding for three new projects to better manage Australia's groundwater whilst launching National Water Week 2009 at Parliament House in Canberra.

Dr Kelly said, "The theme for this year's National Water Week is 'Securing Our Water Future' and this is particularly appropriate when it comes to Australia's groundwater management. Groundwater makes up approximately 17% of Australia's accessible water resources and accounts for over 30% of our total water consumption. Yet this precious resource is neither understood nor managed as well as it needs to be.

"The first project that I am announcing today will help secure our groundwater quality. The Rudd Government has allocated \$1.8 million to assess the vulnerability of Australia's coastal groundwater resources to seawater intrusion. Seawater intrusion occurs when seawater is drawn into a coastal aquifer, and is usually caused by excessive levels of groundwater extraction."

This project will improve our understanding of the risk of seawater intrusion to coastal groundwater systems, especially where there is continuing or planned groundwater pumping.

Dr Kelly said, "As we increasingly tap into groundwater reserves to supplement declining surface water supplies, we need to ensure that we do not harvest these resources faster than they are replenished.

"Accordingly, I am announcing \$250,000 to assess and improve Australia's groundwater licensing, metering and extraction estimation arrangements and techniques. Effective metering of groundwater use is critical to managing impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems, nearby groundwater users and connected surface water resources, and is vitally important in many catchments and irrigation areas.

"A further \$75,000 will be used to scope a decision support system that could improve assessment and response times for groundwater trades.

The National Water Commission has funded these projects under its National Groundwater Action Plan. Project details are available on the National Water Commission website.