



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water

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NEW REPORT CONFIRMS WATER PURCHASE DELIVERING RESULTS

A new report shows water purchase is helping to return the rivers and wetlands of the Murray Darling Basin to health, the Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water, Senator Penny Wong said today.

The *Commonwealth Environmental Water 2008-09 Outcomes Report* outlines the environmental benefits provided through the 10.9 billion litres of water returned to ten wetlands in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales during the 2008-09 water year.

This was the first year that environmental flows were delivered as a result of the Rudd Government's water purchasing program.

Since then, a further 68 billion litres of water has been allocated to wetlands and floodplains in the Basin during the 2009-10 water year, with nearly 800 billion litres of water entitlements having been purchased by the Rudd Government as at the end of February 2010.

"This report demonstrates that the Rudd Government's water purchasing program is delivering real and lasting benefits to the Basin's rivers and wetlands," Senator Wong said.

"Trees have responded with new growth, salinity is decreasing, and rare and endangered species are benefiting from the return of water to their habitats.

"The Rudd Government understands that we need to improve the health of our rivers and wetlands and that the quickest way of doing this is by purchasing water entitlements from willing sellers across the Basin.

"It is important to remember that the Australian Government's water purchase program is not only benefiting our rivers and wetlands, but it is also smoothing the transition for irrigators to new, lower limits on water use that can be expected under the Basin Plan."

The Australian Government's \$3.1 billion *Restoring the Balance in the Murray Darling Basin* program is a key element under the \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* initiative.

"Delivering water to the environment and achieving these outcomes has been a cooperative effort, with state governments, catchment management authorities and the local community all playing their part in protecting the Basin's key environmental assets," Senator Wong said.

While these initial results are positive, the full ecological benefit of the environmental watering program will take time to emerge. The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder will provide regular, ongoing reports on the outcomes of the environmental watering program.

The *Commonwealth Environmental Water 2008-09 Outcomes Report* is available at:
www.environment.gov.au/water