



**MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES
MINISTER FOR MINERAL RESOURCES**

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 1 March 2007

Murrumbidgee high security water users have access to extra 14GL

The Lemna Government has delivered a win for high security water users in the Murrumbidgee Valley, by releasing an extra 14 gigalitres of water for use by local irrigators, NSW Natural Resources Minister, Ian Macdonald said today.

“The additional water, equivalent to 14,000 Olympic swimming pools, has been made available following recent rainfall in the valley and milder weather patterns, which has reduced evaporated river losses from the system,” he said.

“The additional water, equivalent to 5% of total allocations, will mainly go to citrus and grape growers with permanent plantings.

“This means that high security allocations are now around 90%.

“This is good news for this area - and many of the businesses set to receive water, such as feedlots, are some of the biggest local employers.

“In November last year in the grip of a worsening drought the Government was forced to reduce allocations in the valley and suspend 10% of the water available to high security licence holders, taking their allocations down to 85%.

“We are now able to re-allocate some of this water, allowing growers to maintain their permanent plantings and ensuring they are better placed to recover when the drought finally breaks.”

Mr Macdonald said about 900 horticulturalist families in the valley will benefit from this decision.

“The Lemna Government has decided to allocate this additional water to high security users, as most general security summer cropping requirements are completed,” he said.

“While we realise the situation for all irrigators is still critical, the extra water will provide some measure of relief for the region’s citrus and grape growers, who form a vital part of the local economy.”

Snowy Hydro has released an additional 94GL into the Murrumbidgee system, above this year’s expectations, but this water has been reserved to meet essential urban water and stock and domestic supplies for 2007/08.

Minister Macdonald said minimum inflows expected from Snowy Hydro in 2007/08, together with the minimum reserve of 50GL, will supply the immediate critical urban water supply and stock and domestic needs for 2007/08 if the dry conditions continue.

“Once critical water supply needs in the valley for 2007/08 are met, the State Government will re-allocate any future inflows in the remainder of the season to other water users.

“While today’s announcement provides some immediate relief, the water supply situation in the Murrumbidgee and indeed across the State remains critically low, and the first priority of the State Government will be to meet immediate town water supplies and domestic needs.

“Unlike the Opposition we’re making the tough decisions necessary for local communities to survive the drought. The only policy the Opposition has so far is to gut essential services from rural and regional communities by cutting 20,000 jobs.”

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