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## WATER OUTLOOK FOR EASTERN MOUNT LOFTY RANGES RELEASED

The CSIRO report *Water Availability in the Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges* was released today by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources.

The report is the second in a series covering the entire Murray-Darling Basin commissioned by the Prime Minister and Murray-Darling Basin state Premiers at the November 2006 Water Summit.

The Eastern Mount Lofty Ranges region in South Australia is in the far south-west of the Murray-Darling Basin and covers less than one per cent of the total area of the Basin. The region is based around the Marne, Bremer and Finnis rivers; these and other numerous rivers and streams drain into the River Murray and Lake Alexandrina. The wetlands of national significance in the region are the Tookayerta and Finnis catchments, the Marne River Mouth and Ambersun-West Swamp.

About 52,000 people live in the region where major land uses are dryland cropping and grazing. Irrigated cropping, for hay production, vines and horticulture, accounts for less than three per cent of total land use, and there are small areas of commercial plantation forestry.

The CSIRO's 'best' estimate of the likely range of future climate outcomes is an 18 per cent reduction in water availability. However, there is considerable uncertainty in the climate predictions for 2030 arising from different climate models and different global warming scenarios. This means that reduced water availability could range from 3 per cent to 52 per cent.

The report finds that future groundwater extraction could be cause for concern in parts of the reporting region and notes increasing groundwater salinity in the Angas Bremer Groundwater Management Unit and the Currency Creek region.

Information in the report will be used to develop the new sustainable diversion limit for the river systems in the Basin, which is a key responsibility of the new Murray-Darling Basin Authority under the *Water Act 2007*.

The integrated surface water and groundwater sustainable diversion limit will be part of the Basin-wide water plan the Authority will develop. Along with the CSIRO work other scientific and economic inputs and consultation with stakeholders will be used to determine the limit.

Reports on the other Murray-Darling Basin catchments will be provided progressively through to early 2008.

More information about the CSIRO Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields project can be found at [www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/yields.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/yields.html)

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