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

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$77M RECOVERY PACKAGE ANNOUNCED FOR HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN RIVER

Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly joined Member for Lindsay, David Bradbury, today to announce details of a $77.4 million funding package to help restore the health of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River in western Sydney.

Dr Kelly said the funding from the Australian Government, under the *Water for the Future* program, would be complemented by $5.1 million from the New South Wales Government and Hawkesbury City Council with further contributions of $14.2 million from landholders.

The funding will go to a range of programs that will help to save and recycle water used in irrigation, remove harmful nutrients from the River, and buy back water licences.

“This is an historic injection of funds and this announcement confirms the Australian Government’s commitment to restoring the Hawkesbury-Nepean River,” Dr Kelly said.

“Two centuries of development have left the river, which flows through urban areas and farm land, under significant stress from over-extraction, high nutrient loads causing algal blooms and excessive weed growth and declining numbers of native fish.

“Funding that I am announcing today will enable the NSW Government, Hawkesbury City Council and landholders to address these problems through a range of measures that when complete will prevent 41 tonnes of nitrogen and seven tonnes of phosphorus entering the river per year.

Mr Bradbury said that the installation of meters and telemetry devices will improve irrigation techniques and save water.

“It is estimated that 11.5 gigalitres per annum will be saved through improved irrigation efficiency and improved water accounting, this will be shared between environmental flows and farmers,” said Mr Bradbury.

This package is additional to $500,000 that the Australian Government provided last year towards Hawkesbury River County Council’s purchase of an aquatic weed harvester to improve water quality and flow. The weed harvester, which the community can now see working on the river, delivers on an Australian Government election commitment.

“Together, these measures will make a significant contribution to restoring the health of the Hawkesbury-Nepean River as well as delivering benefits for the people who rely on the river for farming and recreation,” Dr Kelly said.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Recovery Package comprises seven projects. A description of each project is attached.

HAWKESBURY-NEPEAN RIVER RECOVERY PROJECT

IMPROVING WATER BALANCE ACCOUNTING: The NSW Department of Water and Energy

Improving the health of the Nepean River requires accurate information on the timing and amount of surface water extractions. By installing or upgrading up to 2000 water meters the project will: ensure equitable and efficient management of water use; protect environmental flows from extraction; and manage cumulative extraction within the sustainable yield under the Water Management Act 2000. The project is estimated to result in 2.85 gigalitres per year of water savings and a reduction in nutrient export of 1.4 tonnes per year of total nitrogen and 0.1 tonnes per annum of total phosphorus.

IRRIGATION AND LANDSCAPE EFFICIENCY (ILEP) PROJECT: Sydney Water

The ILEP Program aims to achieve 1.06 gigalitres of water savings per year through improved technology and land management practices to promote efficient irrigation. Irrigation and landscape assessment will be offered at no cost to State government and local government facilities and with 50:50 co-funding to commercial facilities. Based on the assessment recommendations, on-ground measures will be implemented on a 50:50 cost sharing basis.

PURCHASE OF WATER LICENCES: NSW Department of Water and Energy

The purchase of an estimated 3 gigalitres per year of water entitlements for the environment. The Metropolitan Water Sharing Plan will be gazetted under the Water Management Act in 2009. Once the Plan has been gazetted, the project will purchase water entitlement licences from willing sellers.

SOUTH WINDSOR EFFLUENT RE-USE SCHEME: Hawkesbury City Council

The project will replace 0.1 gigalitres per year of potable water now being used for open space irrigation with treated effluent from the South Windsor Sewage Treatment Plant. This will also to reduce total nitrogen loads discharged into the Hawkesbury River system from the Sewage Treatment Plant by 0.44 tonnes per year. A water treatment plant will be constructed at the existing South Windsor Sewage Treatment Plant as will a distribution system to supply the recycled water to Council Reserves and school grounds.

NUTRIENT SMART MANAGEMENT: The NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority

The project will improve water quality in the Hawkesbury-Nepean River by reducing the export of nitrogen by 27 tonnes per year and phosphorous by 6 tonnes per year. This will be achieved by reducing diffuse nutrient loads exported from agricultural activity downstream of the major water supply dams. Grazing, dairy, market gardens, turf farms and small farms will be targeted for on-ground works and capacity building.

WATER SMART FARMS: NSW Department of Primary Industries

The project will save 5.9 gigalitres of water per year from irrigated farms in the Sydney Basin. Of this, 3.3 gigalitres per year will be legally secured for additional environmental flows in the Hawkesbury-Nepean system, and 2.6 gigalitres per year will remain with the entitlement holders. The project also seeks to reduce export to the river of 11.8 tonnes of nitrogen and 1.2 tonnes of phosphorous per year. The initial focus will be on turf farms, vegetable growers, nurseries and greenhouses. The project includes irrigation system upgrades, recycling and reuse works, and training opportunities.

NUTRIENT EXPORT MONITORING: NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change

The Hawkesbury Nepean River Recovery Project aims to prevent an estimated 48.2 tonnes of nutrients entering the river system each year. The Nutrient Smart and Water Smart Farms projects will achieve the majority of the nutrient load reduction. To verify the reduction, this project will measure the quantity of nutrients moving off farms before and after those projects implementation.

SUMMARY OF THE COMPONENT PROJECTS