



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

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NEW CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT FOR VICTORIA'S OVENS CATCHMENT

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong and Victorian Water Minister Tim Holding today released the latest chapter in the CSIRO's work to assess future water availability in the Murray Darling Basin.

The CSIRO *Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields* project is being undertaken on behalf of the Australian Government and the Murray-Darling Basin States.

The project looks at the impacts of climate change and land use change across the 18 catchments comprising the Murray Darling Basin.

Senator Wong said the report for the Ovens catchment released today yet again confirmed the harsh realities of climate change.

CSIRO's 'best estimate' indicates a 13 per cent reduction in average end-of-system flows from the Ovens system into the Murray River by 2030. This is equivalent to a 228 billion litre reduction in flow to the Murray per year.

The report shows the situation would be even worse if the climate patterns of the last ten years continue in the long term, with average inflow to the Murray reduced by 27 per cent by 2030, or 473 billion litres a year.

Senator Wong said the CSIRO work would be a key input to future decision making on water.

"The Rudd Government is committed to securing water supplies as we deal with the challenges of climate change," Senator Wong said.

"To do this, we must have a strong body of scientific evidence on water availability to inform our decisions for the future."

Victorian Water Minister Tim Holding said the CSIRO work would be a valuable input to the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy to be released early next year.

"Just yesterday we released a discussion paper into the Northern Region Strategy and we will ensure the CSIRO work across the Basin is a key input as we develop the strategy over the coming year," he said.

The CSIRO report into the Ovens region also indicates there would be:

- A 46 per cent reduction in flows to the Murray under the driest 2030 scenario;
- A continuation of historic average flows under the wettest 2030 scenario;
- More frequent mild and severe water restrictions under all but the wettest scenario; and
- Less frequent and smaller flood events in the billabongs of the lower Ovens River under all but the wettest scenario, leading to consequences for the environment.

Around 46,000 people live in the Ovens region, which is based on the Ovens and King Rivers in north-eastern Victoria. The region covers 0.7 per cent of the total area of the Basin.

The Ovens River is one of the last, largely unregulated rivers in the Basin, containing diverse aquatic habitats and threatened species, including Murray Cod. The Ovens River channel from downstream of Wangaratta to Lake Mulwala is an environmental asset of national importance.

Reports on the 18 Murray-Darling Basin catchments are being published progressively. More information about the CSIRO *Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields* project can be found at www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/yields.html

The Victorian Government's Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy Discussion Paper can be found by following the links to 'water' at www.dse.vic.gov.au.