



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW 63/08

12 May 2008

NEW REPORTS RELEASED ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN MURRAY DARLING

The Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today welcomed the release of three new reports on the effect of climate change on future water availability in the Murray Darling Basin.

CSIRO released the reports on the Goulburn-Broken, Campaspe and Loddon-Avoca regions of Victoria as part of the *Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields* project being undertaken on behalf of the Australian Government and the Murray-Darling Basin states.

The project looks at the impact of climate change and land use change across the Basin's 18 catchments.

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

"The *Sustainable Yields* project is an important tool in gathering scientific evidence on water availability to inform future decisions.

"These latest reports emphasise the importance of developing a new integrated surface water and groundwater cap on water diversions for the Murray Darling Basin."

The three regions account for 4.8 per cent of the total area of the Murray Darling Basin. Land use includes cereal cropping, grazing, pastures and hay, orchards and dairying.

Also in these regions are nationally important wetlands and floodplains, and the internationally significant Ramsar Kerang Wetlands. Water from the Goulburn-Broken region provides flows to the Barmah-Milewa forest and Gunbower forest wetland Ramsar sites along the River Murray.

The CSIRO reports on the Goulburn-Broken, Campaspe and Loddon-Avoca regions indicate:

- Current levels of surface water use relative to water availability are extremely high in the Goulburn-Broken (50 per cent), and high in the Loddon-Avoca (32 per cent) and Campaspe (36 per cent);
- CSIRO's median (or 'best estimate') 2030 climate change scenario would see a reduction in water availability of 14-18 per cent in each region compared to historic climate, leading to a 5-6 per cent reduction in water diverted;
- Under this 2030 scenario, end-of-stream flows to the River Murray would fall by 22 per cent in the Goulburn-Broken and 27 per cent in both the Campaspe and Loddon-Avoca; and
- Under a continuation of the same climatic conditions of the last decade, surface water availability would be similar to that expected under the driest 2030 scenario.

The CSIRO project will be a key input to a new integrated surface water and groundwater sustainable diversion limit for the Basin, to be developed by the new Murray Darling Basin Authority. More information on the *Sustainable Yields* project can be found at www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/yields.html