



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW 64/08

15 May 2008

\$3.6 MILLION CONTRIBUTION TO ASSIST LATROBE AQUIFER FARMERS

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today announced a contribution of \$3.6 million towards assisting 55 Gippsland irrigators affected by falling groundwater levels in the Latrobe Aquifer.

Senator Wong said the contribution is in line with advice from Victorian and Commonwealth officials that a package of \$7.2 million is appropriate to assist irrigators to access their groundwater entitlements.

“In considering options for assistance, the Government drew on a report by expert consultants under the joint Australian and Victorian government-funded Sustainable Groundwater Management program,” Senator Wong said.

“These expert consultants engaged extensively with local irrigators through the Latrobe Aquifer Reference Group, administered as part of this program.”

The cost of the assistance package is based on the capital cost of bores and pumps, combined with extra pumping costs incurred in the face of declining groundwater levels.

“The Rudd Government’s \$3.6 million contribution is a significant step in providing these irrigators with the certainty they need to continue to access their groundwater entitlements, and to continue to farm into the future,” Senator Wong said.

“We are pleased to be committing our share of assistance today, and look forward to this matter being resolved soon.”

Senator Wong said the Commonwealth contribution was conditional on a groundwater management planning process being established to manage the aquifer on a long-term sustainable basis.

“Careful planning is vital to secure water supplies for Australian farmers and communities now and in the future,” Senator Wong said.

“This is in line with the Rudd Government’s long-term *Water for the Future* plan, which has four key priorities: taking action on climate change, securing water supplies, using water wisely and supporting healthy rivers.”