



Australian Government

# WATER for the FUTURE

## Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin Irrigator-led Group Proposals

**The Australian Government is committed to restoring the health of our rivers by investing in more efficient water use and delivery, by finding new sources of water, and buying back water entitlements from willing sellers to return water to the environment.**

*Water for the Future* is a \$12.9 billion plan to secure the long-term water supply for all Australians and the environment. The four key *Water for the Future* objectives are:

- Taking action on climate change
- Using water wisely
- Securing water supplies
- Healthy rivers and waterways

As part of *Water for the Future*, \$3.1 billion will be invested over ten years in *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin*, to purchase water entitlements from willing sellers. The purchased water will be managed by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) and used to protect and restore the high priority environmental assets in the Murray-Darling Basin. The water will also help to keep the Murray mouth open, and protect against algal bloom outbreaks, salinity and other water quality risks that threaten the health of our rivers and livelihood of our farmers.

### Developing a Group Proposal

The Australian Government recognises that groups of irrigators may wish to develop coordinated proposals for selling their water entitlements to the Commonwealth and decommissioning or altering shared off-farm irrigation supply infrastructure under the *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin* program.

As well as contributing to healthy rivers and waterways, it is expected that such proposals may assist the Australian Government in achieving other *Water for the Future* objectives such as taking action on climate change and using water wisely.



River Murray at the Gulf (J Baker)

The Government is inviting groups of irrigators to work with their irrigation water provider and other directly affected parties to develop proposals. Working together has the potential to provide a number of benefits for the parties involved, including:

- Allowing irrigators to sell their water entitlements and restructure their businesses;
- Allowing irrigation water providers to decommission inefficient channels, pipelines and other infrastructure. The Australian Government will consider making a contribution towards the cost of infrastructure works where such a contribution could be justified in terms of key *Water for the Future* priorities (particularly 'taking action on climate change' and 'using water wisely');
- Providing the Australian Government with the opportunity to make value for money purchases of water entitlements under the *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin* program that can be used to protect and restore environmental assets;
- Where infrastructure is to be decommissioned, there may be savings in conveyance water, which can be retained by the irrigation water provider to benefit the business and/or remaining irrigators, or sold to the Commonwealth, thereby enhancing returns to irrigators selling their entitlements; and
- Where irrigation supply infrastructure is to be removed, irrigators may be able to negotiate reductions in any termination fees charged by their water provider.

*Water for the Future* is a long-term plan to secure the water supply for all Australians. The Government is investing \$12.9 billion over 10 years to address four key priorities:

- Taking action on climate change
- Using water wisely
- Securing water supplies
- Supporting healthy rivers

There are four key features that the Government is looking for in industry-led group proposals:

1. Acquiring value for money water entitlements that the Australian Government can use to protect environmental assets and support healthy rivers;
2. Rationalising irrigation supply infrastructure to address system losses and better prepare irrigation regions for the future impact of climate change;
3. Using water wisely; and
4. Ensuring that appropriate consultation with directly affected parties has occurred.

### **MORE INFORMATION**

Detailed information about how to develop a group proposal is available at [www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/entitlement-purchasing/irrigator-proposals.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/mdb/entitlement-purchasing/irrigator-proposals.html)

For more information about *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin* program, and the opportunity for developing a proposal, call 1800 218 478 or email [waterpurchasing@environment.gov.au](mailto:waterpurchasing@environment.gov.au)

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Goulburn-Murray irrigation canal (J Baker)