

Thursday, 13 March 2008

CONSULTATION BEGINS FOR RIVER MURRAY RECOVERY

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald is encouraging all communities to be part of planning for recovery in the River Murray system.

“There are numerous issues we are dealing with as a consequence of continued low flows and the drought and we will continue to do that in the short-term,” Minister Maywald said.

“However at the same time, we need to begin to plan for when it does rain and the drought begins to break, how we will approach the recovery of the system and priorities for where water will be allocated.

“Recovery means different things to different groups and individuals and it will be a complex and time-consuming process, requiring commitment from all.”

Minister Maywald says recovery is likely to take several years because of low flows along the river and the low volume of water in storage.

“Recovery will involve difficult trade-offs and balancing competing demands.

“Some of these will include restoring irrigation allocations, returning water levels to normal below Lock 1 and delivering sufficient water for a healthy river, including flows through the Murray Mouth.

“The State Government will prepare an initial issues paper by the end of April 2008 for consultation with drought community groups.

“This paper will outline recovery issues, including a draft process for decision-making on priority uses of available water.

“Workshops will be held in May with key stakeholder groups such as the Riverland Horticulture Reference Forum, River Murray Advisory Committee, and the Lower Murray Drought Taskforce.

“A final options paper will then be considered in June and a recovery strategy developed.

“I encourage anyone wanting to have input into the recovery strategy to approach their community leaders through the existing drought community groups.”

For more information on which drought community group to contact in your area, phone the Drought Hotline on 180 2020.