

Friday, 4 April 2008

### NATIONAL WATER PLAN BENEFITS TO FLOW FOR SA

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says the future health of the River Murray is the major winner in last week's agreement between all Murray Darling Basin states on the \$10 billion National Plan.

"Criticism that last week's agreement will not deliver significant benefits to South Australia is just plain incorrect," she said.

"The agreement is a momentous step forward in how the River Murray system is to be managed and I believe, in years to come, last week's decision will be viewed as a turning point for the river and the communities that depend on it.

"Some commentators have overlooked the fact that the centrepiece of last week's agreement is about getting more water back into the river and now we have a plan, agreed to by all States, to achieve this.

"The key points in the agreement that will directly influence South Australia include:

- Capacity for South Australia to store water in upstream dams.
- Independence in how the Murray-Darling Basin is managed with the new MDB Authority.
- A new Basin-wide plan to be developed by 2011 and a new cap on the amount of water used in the Basin.
- Money from the \$10 billion fund to be invested in projects immediately, delivering environmental water savings before the basin-wide plan is in place.
- A Ministerial Council that will have only an advisory role in the development of the basin plan but importantly with no right of veto, the final decision will belong to the Federal Minister.

"Independence in the management of the Murray-Darling Basin will ensure decisions on the river's health are made using the best independent advice available. A healthy river is good news for South Australia," Minister Maywald said.

"A new Basin-wide cap, which for the first time will include groundwater, means the problems of over-allocation can be addressed and for South Australia, this means more environmental flows over the border.

"South Australia's capacity to store water upstream means we can better manage our supply of water flow into the state.

"Critics of this momentous step forward are simply critics of progress to a healthy river."

