

Tuesday, 20 May 2008

### **WIDESPREAD RAIN NEEDED TO BOOST ALLOCATIONS OUTLOOK**

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says water resource conditions have continued to worsen across the southern Murray-Darling Basin.

“Based on the current water resource outlook for 2008-09 from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, the most likely initial allocation when the water year begins on July 1 would be zero percent,” she said.

“However, the State Government fully understands the adverse impacts this would have and is investigating all possible options to make a small initial allocation. Further advice will be available on Monday, June 16.

“Information received from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission last week shows that over the past three months, rainfall in the upper River Murray catchment was below average and inflows are receding towards previous historical minimum inflows.”

Minister Maywald said water would be available to licensed users who carried-over water from the current water year for use in 2008-09.

“A total of 737 applications have been received to carry-over water for delivery in 2008-09. The total amount of water eligible for carry-over will be calculated following end-of-year meter readings.

“It is expected that at least 50 percent of eligible carry-over will be allocated from July 1 with the remainder to be allocated as the season progresses.

“Water has also been put into reserve to guarantee supply for critical human needs in South Australia during 2008-09.

“In addition, SA has been guaranteed the delivery of 696 gigalitres of dilution flow to cover system losses and to ensure salinity at Murray Bridge does not exceed 1400 EC during 2008-09.”

SA irrigation allocations for the rest of this water year (2007-08) will remain unchanged at 32pc.

Minister Maywald said low rainfall resulted in very low inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin last month.

“During April, the system received only 60GL of inflows, which was not enough to provide any extra water for sharing between New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia.

“The previous minimum was in April 2007, when the system received 42GL. The long-term average for April is 240GL.

“Flows to South Australia have been reduced to 1900 megalitres per day compared to the normal entitlement flow of 3000 ML/day for May.

“Since July 1 last year, only 877GL has been delivered to South Australia, compared to the normal entitlement flow for the same period of 1667GL.

“Flows to South Australia have now remained below normal entitlement flow rates for the past 20 months.

“Licence holders are reminded that the provision of carry-over depends on climate conditions and the ability to deliver it from interstate storages to South Australia. While the government is confident that carry-over can be supplied, an absolute guarantee cannot be given.”

Salinity at Murray Bridge averaged 750 EC last week, compared with an average of about 500 EC in mid-May last year. Meanwhile, at Lake Alexandrina (Milang) it averaged 4180EC, up from 1540EC in May last year. In some parts of the Lower Lakes levels are much higher.

For further information about conditions in the River Murray and wider Murray-Darling Basin visit [www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/](http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/murray/drought/)