

Wednesday, 1 September 2010

IRRIGATOR ALLOCATIONS INCREASED TO 41 PER CENT

Minister for the River Murray Paul Caica today announced that irrigator allocations have been increased to 41 per cent as a result of improved inflows in the River Murray system and the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Mr Caica said South Australia would now receive a minimum of 1,719 GL during 2010-11 under a “worst case” scenario and allocations could be increased by 7 per cent.

“The forecast River Murray system inflows for August 2010 have improved significantly from 480 GL to 1,290 GL,” he said.

“While there has been good rainfall over much of the southern Murray-Darling Basin and inflows have improved, about 720 GL of this inflow was made up of flows from the tributaries owned by New South Wales and Victoria.

“Under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement and current water sharing arrangements, South Australia is not entitled to a share of the inflows to these tributaries

“As a result of these tributary inflows, New South Wales and Victoria have more water available for allocation than South Australia.”

Mr Caica said with the 40 GL improvement from the shared resource and recent improvement of inflows into the Mount Lofty Ranges, a total of 77 GL is available to South Australia to share between irrigation, critical human needs and the environment.

“Irrigation allocations can be increased from 34 per cent to 41 per cent, which exceeds the predicted allocation level of 25 per cent by the end of August 2010 and is significantly higher than at the same time last year when allocations were at 10 per cent.,” he said.

Included in the 1,719 GL minimum currently available to South Australia is an estimated 170 GL to enable irrigators to access 100 per cent of their carry-over water since 1 July 2010. This equates to 26 per cent of the total water that could be allocated to irrigators.

Mr Caica said while he recognised that not all irrigators have carryover water, overall irrigators now have access to 436 GL from the total water currently available to South Australia for allocation.

Mr Caica said we have also secured the 201 GL required for critical human needs in 2011-12 which is in addition to the 201 GL of water already secured for 2010-11 critical human needs.

“The full 170 GL committed to the 2010-11 Lower Lakes Environmental Reserve is also secured and has already been delivered to Lake Alexandrina,” he said.

“A further 60 GL has been accumulated for other environmental reserves for purposes such as providing more water to Lake Albert to mitigate the risk of acidification.

“South Australia will also receive an additional 96 GL for additional dilution flows, which is extra water provided to South Australia to mitigate salinity when storage levels in upstream storages surpass certain levels.

“Additional dilution flows cannot be allocated but will flow through to the Lower Lakes. This 96 GL has increased the total volume of additional dilution flows in 2010-11 to 276 GL.”

Mr Caica said River Murray storages remained low in comparison to the long-term average, however the seasonal outlook for water availability is better than the past three years.

The current volume in Hume, Dartmouth, Menindee Lakes and Lake Victoria is 5,087 GL (54 per cent capacity). This volume includes a large amount of water for private carry-over and critical human water needs for all southern Basin states.

Although this is higher than at the same time last year (2,224 GL, 24 per cent) it is well below the long-term average for this time of year (7130 GL, 76 per cent).

For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.mdba.gov.au