



# MEDIA RELEASE

**Senator the Hon Penny Wong**

*Minister for Climate Change and Water*

---

PW 167/09

19 June 2009

## **\$650 MILLION FOR PRIVATE IRRIGATION INFRASTRUCTURE OPERATORS IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today announced a further step in the Rudd Government's drive to improve the efficiency and productivity of irrigated agriculture in the Murray-Darling Basin and to return water to our rivers.

The new \$650 million *Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program* for NSW will fund irrigation system modernisation projects, providing opportunities for both off-farm and on-farm water efficiency upgrades.

"This \$650 million investment will not only help to upgrade and modernise private irrigation systems in New South Wales, it will also secure a share of the water saved for the stressed rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin," Senator Wong said.

Today's announcement delivers on last year's Council of Australian Governments agreement on Basin reform to fund private irrigation infrastructure projects in the NSW Murray-Darling Basin.

The program forms part of the Government's \$12.9 billion *Water for the Future* plan that aims to take action on climate change, secure our water supplies, use water wisely, and support healthy rivers.

*Water for the Future* sets out a comprehensive plan to put the future of the Basin onto a sustainable footing, and a key component is helping irrigation communities to adjust to a future with less water.

"By investing now in both irrigation efficiency and water purchase, *Water for the Future* is helping smooth the transition for irrigation communities to new, lower limits on water use that we all anticipate under the Basin Plan," Senator Wong said.

"We recognise that the role of private irrigation operators in NSW is crucial to the future prosperity of NSW's irrigation communities.

"This \$650 million program provides them with the assistance they need to implement their modernisation plans and improve irrigation water use efficiency and productivity."

Funding is provided through the *Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure* program under *Water for the Future* and builds on Australian Government funding for private irrigation infrastructure operators through the *Irrigation Modernisation Planning Assistance* program.

Private irrigation infrastructure operators who operate in the NSW Murray-Darling Basin are invited to submit funding applications to the Australian Government.

More information about the program is available at  
[www.environment.gov.au/water/programs/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/programs/index.html)