

**“Snippets Plus”**

**July 2007 – 16A**

**16<sup>th</sup> Edition**

Compiled by collating (cutting & pasting) information sourced from various media from all Australian States, the **Australian Water Association** Weekly News, **FarmOnLine** Daily News, **Murray Darling Association**, via the Internet and various other sources that are available. From printed media only date – source – headline. My comments for what they are worth are in **red**.

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**1<sup>st</sup>**

**Sunday Mail**

**Dams full but bans to remain**

Half of Adelaide’s reservoirs full following recent heavy rains – but tough new water restrictions will still come into effect today.

What a great example of negative reporting, water shortages are not about what SA’s reservoirs are holding it’s about what our catchments in the Eastern States are holding. And what a great opportunity to raise the level of evaporation by keeping **Adelaide’s** so full when much of that water could be left in the River Murray and only pumped when necessary.

**Desal water bill ‘would double’**

Households would increase by as much as \$300 a year to pay for a desalination plant big enough to meet Adelaide’s annual needs.

Once again not thinking about the dangers that could arise in the future if the inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin – and our catchments – remain lower than average. We are already way down on what we have available for our immediate future needs, taking into account we can only hold one years supply (Adelaide’s supply) in our reservoirs.

**2<sup>nd</sup>**

### **Vic floods bring new concerns, relief for others**

Floods are threatening residents of Raymond Island, in Victoria's southeast, but receding waters have brought relief to people in nearby Lakes Entrance. The State Emergency Service (SES) told residents of four small Gippsland towns - Paradise Beach, Golden Beach, Raymond Island and Burrabogie Island - to evacuate. On Sunday, a Raymond Island resident, known only as Wally, said he was concerned for his community.

"Not looking good at all, it's raining as we speak, grave concerns for a lot of houses," Wally told ABC Radio.

"Some of the houses in the middle of the island closer to the foreshore are, as I say, in deep, deep trouble."

But in the coastal town of Lakes Entrance, residents woke to dry roads on Sunday.

Lakes Entrance newsagent Tim Jacques said, "There's a lot of relief," he said. "The water didn't peak as high as they said it would."

But Mr Jacques said some residents thought the floods were worse than those they experienced in 1998.

Saturday night's tide did not reach the expected 1.6m at Lakes Entrance, the State Emergency Service (SES) said. SES spokesman Richard Tindall said waters peaked in the town about 8pm (AEST) Saturday at levels lower than that of the previous night.

Still, more than 350 residents in East Gippsland had to leave their homes on Saturday night. SOURCE: AAP

### **Farmers to pay for dam water in WA**

Farmers who spent time and money building their own dams to store water for stock and domestic uses have been told by WA Water Resources Minister, John Kobelke, that they will have to pay for the water they collect.

He said the changes would bring farmers using water from their large dams in line with those who use bore water.

But, WA Farmers Water Resources spokesman, Steve Dilley, says this decision by the government is all 'smoke and mirrors'.

"We are bewildered and disappointed at the Minister's lack of understanding of the impact this will have on the average fruit and veggie grower and the family farming operations in the state," Mr Dilley said.

"They will be paying, on average, from \$600 to \$1200 or \$1800 a year.

"That the Minister can exempt licence fees for more than 2,700 domestic bores is a real slap in the face.

"How could any government proceed with a fee structure that makes family farms pay \$1.02 to \$2.40 a megalitre of water licensed, yet water utilities, big water cooperatives and mining companies only pay 14c a megalitre.

2

"I'm staggered that the Minister did not at least make the most obvious change and charge everyone the average cost of \$2.27 per megalitre — at least that would have gone some way to making the fee structure fairer."

SOURCE: Extract from report in *Farm Weekly*, WA, June 28th.

### **Gippsland assesses damage as floods recede**

Floodwaters are receding in Victoria's Lakes Entrance as residents tally the damage from overnight flooding on Friday and Saturday, as flooded river waters met king tides on reaching the coast.

About 350 residents in Lakes Entrance evacuated on Saturday night ahead of a high tide at Lakes Entrance, peaking at 1.6 metres.

But the tide did not reach the expected level and the waters were now receding, the State Emergency Service (SES) said.

SES spokesman Richard Tindall said waters peaked in the town about 8pm (AEST) Saturday at levels lower than the night before.

The State Emergency Service (SES) told residents of four small towns near Paynesville and Loch Sport - Paradise Beach, Golden Beach, Raymond Island and Burrabogie Island - to evacuate.

Mr Tindall said crews would continue monitoring water levels in the towns and continue sandbagging activities to protect homes and property.

About 54,000 sandbags have been shipped to the Gippsland region where volunteer emergency staff worked feverishly to barricade doors of businesses and homes in Lakes Entrance to block out the murky waters.

The federal government is sending another 30,000 sandbags to the area.

Health fears have emerged as septic tanks overflowed in the deluge.

Mr Tindall said a large portion of homes across the region were on septic tank systems and residents needed to be aware of the increased risk of disease.

Victorian Police and Emergency Services Minister Bob Cameron said the SES and Country Fire Authority (CFA) had 700 volunteers working on the floods a few days ago.

"Those numbers have reduced because the number of roofing problems has fallen away," he told ABC radio.

"However, that means (fresh) Victorian crews can replace them and give them relief, but if there needs to be a surge there's other Victorian crews available and interstate crews if necessary."

It's started raining again in East Gippsland on Sunday.

SOURCE: AAP

### **Another wave of farm-gate milk price rises**

The decision by the big milk processor, Dairy Farmers, on Tuesday to lift farm gate milk prices by up to 20pc has added to the recent surge in milk prices across Australia.

**FarmOnLine**

**Victoria still holding out**

After holding out for almost five months, Victoria might agree to the Commonwealth's controversial \$10 billion plan for the Murray-Darling scheme as early as next week.

Ignoring a Howard Government deadline to finalise the deal by today, Premier Steve Bracks said he had written to the Commonwealth with Victoria's latest concerns over the scheme, and any response would be considered by cabinet on Monday.

Mr Bracks said Victoria's issues were keeping the management of land north of the Dividing Range and retaining control over water allocations.

Yesterday, Prime Minister John Howard accused the Victorian Government of trying to deny the Commonwealth a win in the lead-up to the federal election.

Asked if he would be in position to say yes or no to the deal following Monday's meeting, Mr Bracks said: "We will wait and see what the response of the Federal Government is.

"Certainly progress is being made."

Victoria is the only basin state not to have signed on to the scheme.

Mr Howard said all he was asking for was for Victoria to agree to what the other states agreed to five months ago.

"Nobody could accuse me of holding a gun to the head of the Victorian Government," Mr Howard told ABC radio.

Victorian Farmers Federation president Simon Ramsay encouraged further dialogue between the state and federal governments and said stakeholders should not be pressured into meeting a deadline imposed by the Howard Government.

He said he supported Mr Bracks' agreeing to refer powers to the Commonwealth to manage caps on irrigation, but anything beyond that would put the rights of Victorian irrigators at risk.

"There's no real reason for the Commonwealth to have any more power that doesn't allow Victoria to manage its systems," he said.

Meanwhile, Liberal federal MP, Sharman Stone has asked that federal officers examine the environmental impact of the Bracks Government plans to pipe water from the Goulburn system to Melbourne.

SOURCE: *The Age*, July 12.

**Outcry over water tank prices**

Some water tank manufacturers stand accused of profiteering as demand rockets and dam levels plummet in drought-affected areas.

The issue has surfaced following comments Rick and Joanne Gates, Burndoo, south of Wilcannia, NSW by the Nationals' Member for Lockyer, Ian Rickuss.

He claims that one tank manufacturer has increased its prices 12 times in the past 12 months.

"Some of the tanks have gone up from \$5,550, in June last year, to \$8,285 - and from \$445 to \$775," he said.

"That is a price rise of over 40pc in 10 months."

As well, Mr Rickuss said tank re-sellers who had taken orders and set their prices were also unhappy because continued price rises meant either they, or their customers, would be left out of pocket by the time the tanks were delivered.

In tabling a series of complaints made by local constituents, he also castigated the Qld Government for its mismanagement of south-east Queensland's failing water infrastructure.

SOURCE: Extract from, *Queensland Country Life*, July 12.

**Adelaide Advertiser**

**Water Plan**

The Victorian Government has met the Federal Government's dead-line to detail its objections to the National Water Plan sending material to Canberra on its proposed amendments to the \$10 billion Murray-Darling Basin Scheme.

**Water plant firm is 'ready to build'**

International Power, which operates Pelican Point power station, is ready to build a desalination plant on the site. The company has had talks with the State Government on construction should the Government decide to proceed with desalination as a solution to Adelaide's water crisis. International Power has discussed the proposal with Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald and Infrastructure Minister Patrick Conlon.

A spokesman for International Power, which operates a giant desalination power plant in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, said the company had made no secret of its desire to use Pelican Point as a desalination site.

"It makes sense," he said.

He described the talks with Mr Conlon as very informal as Ms Maywald had carriage of the desalination proposal.

If it proceeds with a desalination plant for Adelaide, the Government's preferred option is understood to be for a joint power-desalination complex.

Ms Maywald has just returned from a tour of the Middle East and Singapore to look at desalination plants, including the one at Abu Dhabi.

Mr Conlon confirmed yesterday he met International Power's international chief executive, Phil Cox, this week. "We discussed lots of things, including electricity, desalination and gas," he said. "There is no doubt that energy generation and desalination are inextricably linked."

A Government working party is examining the desalination option. Its report is expected in September or October. Ms Maywald said all other states involved in desalination plants had built only water plants. "Now, in SA, we would need to look at our energy situation. Therefore, it makes sense for us to look at a power and water integrated system," she said.

"The working group's terms of reference require them to consider all options for desalination, including integrated systems."

### **Heat on ABC over 'swindle' doco**

Climate scientists and politicians have slammed the ABC for going ahead with a broadcast of the documentary The Great Global Warming Swindle.

The British director of the documentary, Martin Durkin, said the attacks he had sustained show why scientists who question the causes of climate change don't speak out.

The program sought to disprove the widely accepted theory that carbon dioxide emissions from human activity are responsible for heating up the planet.

Last night's broadcast was followed by a taped interview with Mr Durkin and a studio debate among prominent opponents and supporters of his views.

The film caused an outcry when it was aired earlier in the year on British television and a featured US scientist claimed his views were misrepresented.

Climate scientists say Swindle presents false data and discredited science.

"This isn't a documentary, because documentaries are about fact," said Professor Ove Hoegh-Guldberg of the University of Queensland.

"All this will achieve is to confuse the public and policy makers about one of the most well-researched and locked-down scientific facts of our time," he said.

### 30

Australian Democrats leader Lyn Allison said the program fed "conspiracy theorist sceptics" and was a flawed attempt to pacify conservative critics of the broadcaster.

"The ABC has fallen into the trap of screening patent nonsense in a bid to prove how unbiased it has become," Senator Allison said.

The Australian Greens called the program "junk science".

Mr Durkin rejected the view that an overwhelming majority of scientists believed mankind's greenhouse gas emissions caused global warming.

"I can understand now why so few scientists are prepared to really stick their neck out and take this issue on because you're lambasted if you dare to," he told Southern Cross Broadcasting.

"To suggest that this theory isn't true is an absolute taboo.

"The trouble is it's a dodgy theory combined with a very big fashionable prejudice which is the kind of anti-industry kick that so many left and middle class people seem to be into these days."

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) said the documentary should be compulsory viewing for anybody with an interest in the climate change debate.

"It's refreshing that we're now being presented with views that challenge the widely-accepted view that climate change is somehow the exclusive fault of industrial activities in the Western world," AMEC spokesman Ian Loftus said.

Amid the storm over Swindle, a business group yesterday became the first of its kind to support a short-term greenhouse target.

The National Business Leaders Forum on Sustainable Development called for a 20 per cent cut in emissions by 2020 from 2000 levels.

"An ambitious short-term target will be necessary if Australia is to meet its long-term commitment," said the forum, whose members include former Liberal leader John Hewson.

"It is also a way to galvanise the economy and to create the conditions for a useful and relevant domestic cap and trade scheme in greenhouse gas emissions."

Prime Minister John Howard has ridiculed political opponents for supporting the same target.

15<sup>th</sup>

**The Australian**

### Put 10c a litre tax on drivers: Caltex

Petrol prices would rise by 10c a litre to cover the cost of carbon under a plan by Australia's biggest oil refiner as part of its response to the greenhouse debate. Caltex wants the Howard Government to impose a \$40-a-tonne carbon fuel tax on motorists rather than make the retail fuel industry adopt a complicated emissions-trading system.

By having the Government levy the carbon tax on motorists, the company would avoid the odium of being forced to raise prices to cover the cost of the permits that would be issued under the more complicated emissions trading scheme.

The 10c-a-litre carbon tax would avoid the petrol price fluctuations associated with the carbon pricing in emissions permits. In Europe, the cost of the permits has fluctuated wildly as the market in carbon rises and falls.

The proposal by Caltex, which accounts for about 30 per cent of the nation's transport fuels market, would result in the Government raising up to \$3.9 billion a year from users of petrol and diesel.

Caltex will contact all federal and state politicians about its plan next week. Managing director Des King said yesterday a direct tax on fuel users would be far more effective than a cap-and-trade emissions scheme in bringing home to consumers the cost of carbon emissions.

In the 2001 election year, John Howard was forced to cut fuel excise by 1.5c a litre because of the public backlash over high prices.

Mr King says Caltex supports national initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and is proposing a carbon tax on fuels involving a national pricing mechanism for controlling emissions.

Caltex accepted the science behind global warming, he said, particularly the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which maintain that increased temperatures in the past century were probably caused by greenhouse gases in the atmosphere as a result of human activity.

The company was advocating a broad approach to cutting emissions, recognising that there were many options.

Mr King said the goal of reducing carbon emissions by 2050 should be adjusted from time to time on the basis of the best available science.

"We believe a long-term aspirational goal for emissions reduction is important," he said.

"It demonstrates we accept climate change is a serious issue and our business is likely to change."

Emissions trading aims to reduce greenhouse gas pollution by providing economic incentives for reducing emissions. In a cap-and-trade system, a central authority sets limits or caps on each pollutant.

Operators that intend to exceed the limits have to buy emissions credits from other organisations that can stay below their designated limits.

Under the Caltex proposal, its refinery operations would be subject to the cap-and-trade emissions scheme the Prime Minister has said Australia will be operating by 2011. But retail sales would attract a tax to go directly to government coffers.

Mr King said it would be up to the Government to use the revenue for national greenhouse gas emissions reduction programs, rather than put it in general revenue.

The company says imposing a carbon tax on transport would avoid the huge financial risk of having to purchase more than \$1 billion in emissions permits for customers, and having to recover the cost through the market.

Caltex says it emits about two million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year, mostly from its oil refineries at Kurnell in Sydney and at Lytton at the mouth of the Brisbane River.

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## 32

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### **Minority group in TV hijacking**

The TV debate following the ABC's hit *The Great Global Warming Swindle* was hijacked by members of a nationalist political party.

As the national broadcaster was yesterday celebrating the news that the documentary questioning man's contribution to climate change averaged 1.1 million viewers in the five capital cities, and a further 500,000 in regional areas on Thursday, it emerged that a post-program audience discussion was dominated by members of the Citizens Electoral Council of Australia.

The CEC, which has links to US conspiracy theorist Lyndon LaRouche, maintains global warming "is a political campaign spearheaded by Al Gore and piloted by the same people pushing globalisation".

Half the audience members given the floor by host Tony Jones were members of the CEC. "Fifteen of our members got into the audience," said Craig Isherwood, CEC national secretary. "We were rather surprised ourselves that we got so many in."

The members unexpectedly introduced carbon 14, eugenics, Plato's cave and Nazism into the already confused debate, one member noting the global warming fear was "Hitler-Nazi race science and this will destroy Africa". "There's a certain tolerance level of what can be said on TV and he didn't come within coo-ee of that," said the executive producer of the ABC broadcast, Erik Dwyer.

"I'd love to say it was a brilliant piece of audience casting but all I can say is I'm glad I didn't stand in front of the doorway at the ABC because I would have been crushed by people wanting to be a part of the show."

The CEC, which is funded by local donations and subscriptions, has more than 3500 members, said Mr Isherwood. Mr Dwyer said the questions from the floor could not be anticipated but were handled smoothly by Jones.

"When you invite the public in, that's basically all you can do," said Mr Dwyer. "They were bloody keen to have a go."

The documentary by filmmaker Martin Durkin stirred controversy long before it was shown because of its premise that man-made climate change was "unmitigated nonsense".

Climate change critic Bob Carter praised the ABC for screening it but criticised the discussion involving a panel of eight experts.

"You should give full marks to the ABC for showing it," he told *The Weekend Australian*.

But the debate "missed the whole point. They wanted to assess the motives and the characters of the people involved and they weren't talking about the scientific issues."

### 33

WWF chief executive Greg Bourne said the discussion involving the panel of experts and the participation of audience members was appropriate as it raised issues other than the science of climate change.

"I think it moved the debate away from a science debate and towards a management of risk issue. Had that (documentary) been shown raw it would have been an unbelievably biased piece of journalism."

The documentary was the ABC's 14th-highest-rating program of the year. It helped push the ABC's ratings share past the Ten Network's and into third place on the night.

"That says it's an issue we know young people are interested in and if we present things well, younger viewers will come to the ABC," said director of ABC TV, Kim Dalton. He added that despite the controversy, the ABC was happy with the response.

"I was never all that concerned about the criticism. The argument that you can't trust the audience and you've got to be careful what you show them is paternalistic and patronising.

"But at the same time we would have been due the criticism if we just played the documentary without the debate."

### **Beattie roams skies for water**

A specially fitted plane will roam southeast Queensland skies from November under the Beattie Government's contentious \$7.6million trial of cloud-seeding technology.

The project, which centres on "glaciogenic cloud seeding", will involve a plane scattering silver iodide into storm clouds to increase rain in dam catchment areas.

Natural Resources and Water Minister Craig Wallace said yesterday that research into the project would continue ahead of take-off to ensure money was spent wisely.

Mr Wallace said he could not guarantee the plans would go ahead but remained hopeful. "In the worst drought on record we are looking at all methods to secure new water supplies, including drilling for groundwater, purified recycled water, desalination and cloud seeding," he said.

Project adviser Roger Stone from the University of Southern Queensland said for the cloud-seeding project to work "the effort has to be in getting the best aircraft in the world".

The aircraft will also investigate local weather systems and is scheduled to fly in November to coincide with southeast Queensland's wet season. "I hope we get the clouds in November to see it happen," Mr Wallace said, acknowledging the final decision would be left to the experts.

Cloud seeding will also be used throughout Australia to enhance water supplies for hydro-electric power generation.

### **Climate doco goes troppo**

The ABC heralded it as "one of the most controversial documentaries of our time". But last night's broadcast of The Great Global Warming Swindle - dubbed the definitive retort to Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth - lost out to the farce that followed.

Following the screening of the 50-minute film about climate change, a strangely one-sided interview was aired between regular Lateline host Tony Jones and the film's director, Martin Durkin. The fierce interrogation appeared to leave the filmmaker bemused. A discussion between a panel of eight experts then dissected the documentary, which claimed the chief cause of climate change was not human activity but changes in solar radiation.

But it was not long before the 100-strong studio audience became impatient and started calling out questions. Jones eventually opened the discussion up to the floor, but by the look on his face he quickly realised he should have stuck with the panel.

The first question was more a rant about "coal 14", and its dangers - a topic none of the panel seemed to know anything about. Another audience member then asked about Prince Philip's role in founding the green movement, and how he had once remarked how he wished he could be reincarnated as the ebola virus in order to reduce the population. What did the panel think about that?

Some in the audience began giggling as questions were being asked, which was perhaps a shame because some words of wisdom did emerge. The last question came from a man who said he cared less about fighting within the science community than about the government policies needed to address climate change. "Rome is burning, and we are fiddling around here." And with that, the studio lights were turned off.

### **'Swindle' director hits back at critics**

The director of a controversial documentary about global warming airing on ABC television tonight says he's been vilified for challenging popular theory.

Briton Martin Durkin directed The Great Global Warming Swindle, which seeks to debunk the idea that climate change is being caused by human activity.

Climate scientists and minor political parties in Australia have criticised the national broadcaster for screening what ABC journalist Tony Jones says is a "deeply flawed" program.

Mr Durkin today accused his opponents of prejudice and denied that an overwhelming majority of scientists believed mankind's greenhouse gas emissions caused global warming.

34

"Doing this film has really opened my eyes about how sinister the whole affair is," he told Southern Cross Broadcasting.

"I can understand now why so few scientists are prepared to really stick their neck out and take this issue on because you're lambasted if you dare to. To suggest that this theory isn't true is an absolute taboo."

Mr Durkin said support among scientists for the theory fell well short of the claimed consensus.

He referred to the Oregon Petition which opposes the Kyoto Protocol, saying it had more than 17,000 scientist signatories.

"The trouble is it's a dodgy theory combined with a very big fashionable prejudice which is the kind of anti-industry kick that so many left and middle class people seem to be into these days."

The British director said there was no evidence to support the theory that carbon dioxide had affected the planet's climate in the past.

"The climate has been changing throughout all of Earth's history all of the time.

"The recent warming we've had represents a recovery from a particularly cold period in Earth's recent climate history."

Mr Durkin said the planet was in another interglacial period between ice ages and one of the coldest such periods.

"The idea that there's a normal temperature on earth is simply ridiculous."

The documentary first attracted controversy when it aired on Britain's Channel 4 earlier this year.

An edited version screens on ABC TV at 8.30pm (AEST) tonight, followed by a taped interview with Mr Durkin and a studio debate involving opponents and supporters of the film.

"I hope (Australians) watch. Even if they end up disagreeing, I don't mind at all if they give the argument a fair run," he said.

AAP

**Adelaidenow.com.au**

### **Big rains ease state's drought**

New South Wales has recorded some promising drought-reduction figures, and the situation is expected to improve further next month.

The latest official figures show the area of the state in drought has dropped below 70 per cent.

NSW Department of Primary Industry figures, reported today, show widespread rain across the state has reduced the area in drought from 93.2 per cent in January to 69.9 per cent in July.



The July figures are based on rainfall in June.

With the state experiencing further widespread rain in recent weeks, the August figures are expected to show an even bigger improvement.

NSW Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said: "The last time we saw drought figures as low as this was May last year."

Experts say 330mm of rain will need to fall over the next three months for the dry to be formally declared over. Last month represented the biggest reduction in area moving out of drought, dropping from 80.7 per cent in June. In June, the eastern half of the state generally received falls of 25mm or more, resulting in several areas being reclassified.

While the western part of the state received less rain, it was still enough for five areas to shed their drought status. The storm that hit the Hunter and Central Coast last month resulted in the region recording the highest amount of rainfall in the state.

Singleton recorded a massive 250mm, while further south Braidwood, near Canberra, recorded 211mm.

After bordering on empty, the state's dams are also now filling up with water.

Burrinjuck dam in the south of the state is 38 per cent full, while Chaffey dam near Tamworth is at 29 per cent.

Sydney Catchment Authority figures released on Thursday showed Sydney's dams to be at 56.8 per cent capacity.

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16<sup>th</sup> Edition

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Compiled by Peter R. Smith OAM

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15<sup>th</sup>

**MDA**

**Our Water Our Future - The Next Stage of the Government’s Water Plan**

**Desalination Plant to Deliver 150 Billion Litres of Water Per Year**

Australia’s largest desalination plant will be built in the Wonthaggi region to boost water supplies for Melbourne, Geelong, Westernport and South Gippsland by the end of 2011.

The second phase of the Government’s water strategy, *Our Water Our Future* was announced by Premier Steve Bracks to deliver the single biggest boost to Victoria’s water supplies in decades.

A desalination plant to provide 150 billion litres of water per year will be built in the Wonthaggi region. The plant will cost an estimated \$3.1 billion and be completed by late 2011, and includes an 85 kilometre pipeline connecting it to Melbourne.

Smaller pipelines connecting nearby towns in South Gippsland and the Westernport area to the main pipeline will also be constructed, with detailed work to be undertaken by Melbourne Water and local water authorities to assess the best routes.

Desalination will provide a guaranteed water supply independent of rainfall or climate change for the local area, Melbourne and Geelong

A key aim of the \$4.9 billion *Our Water Our Future* plan is to secure water supplies to help move back to unrestricted water supplies in our cities and towns.

The Wonthaggi region had been selected following an extensive feasibility study, which commenced in late 2006. A number of sites were investigated through the study, with the Wonthaggi region proving to have the lowest environmental risk and highest sea water quality.

Bass Strait represents a better environmental outcome than Port Phillip Bay and Western Port because the salty discharge can be dispersed more readily in open sea.

Sufficient renewable energy will be purchased to offset the anticipated 90 megawatts of electricity it will use and ensure the plant is carbon neutral. The desalination plant feasibility study has also been released with further environmental monitoring to take place in the coming months.

**Geelong Pipeline to Boost Supplies by 50 Per Cent**

Premier Steve Bracks has announced an \$80 million pipeline will be built to boost Geelong's water supplies by around 50 per cent by 2011.

The 50 kilometre Geelong- Melbourne Pipeline was a key part of the second phase of the Government's water strategy, *Our Water Our Future*.

The new pipeline will provide up to 16 billion litres a year and will give Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast access to Melbourne's increased supplies from the desalination plant and irrigation upgrades. The additional water would allow the population and economy of Geelong to continue to grow. Geelong is Victoria's second largest city and the population is set to increase by around 50,000 over the next 20 years. Connecting to Melbourne's water supplies gives Geelong much needed water security and economic certainty.

Geelong is currently on Stage 4 water restrictions following record low inflows to local dams in 2006. Lal Lal Reservoir which supplies water to Geelong and Ballarat received just 2 per cent of its long term average inflow last year.

Geelong would benefit from the 225 billion litre boost to the Melbourne water system being provided by the desalination plant and irrigation upgrades from the end of 2011.

2

Prior to completion of the pipeline, Geelong will receive an extra 7 billion litres a year from the Anglesea bore field. In addition, the recently completed upgrade of the Barwon Downs bore field can now provide up to 20 billion litres per year.

The Government would commit \$20 million to the project with the remaining \$60 million to be met through increases to water prices from July next year. Barwon Water will release details of price increases shortly. Pricing proposals from water authorities would be overseen by the Essential Services Commission, the independent price regulator, who will undertake community consultation on the new prices before they take effect from July 2008.

### **More Water for Farmers, Stressed Rivers and Melbourne**

A landmark project has been announced to capture up to 450 billion litres of water currently lost to irrigation inefficiencies in Victoria's Food Bowl region.

The Food Bowl Modernisation Project is part of a \$4.9 billion investment in major infrastructure projects as the next stage of the Government's *Our Water Our Future* plan. Up to 900 billion litres of water in the Goulburn and Murray irrigation systems is currently lost through leaks, evaporation and other inefficiencies. The eight-year Food Bowl Modernisation Project to realise annual water savings of 450 billion litres will require total investment of up to \$2 billion.

\$1 billion would be invested in the first stage of the project to capture 225 billion litres and will provide much needed water to farmers, stressed rivers and Melbourne households and businesses.

With climate change impacting on water supplies throughout the state it is vital that irrigation systems are modernised to ensure regional economies and important rivers can continue to thrive into the future."

\$600 million would come from the State Government with Melbourne Water and Goulburn Murray Water also contributing funds to the \$1 billion first stage of the project. This investment will kick-start the biggest irrigation upgrade ever.

The first 75 billion litres of water saved through the project has been earmarked to boost Melbourne's supply by 2010.

The State Government will now work closely with the community to confirm key elements of the project, including:

- ◆ Governance arrangements to involve local government and community groups in key issues such as the works program and sharing of water savings;
- ◆ Safeguards for Northern Victoria concerning water savings destined for Melbourne;
- ◆ How the water savings destined for irrigation and the environment will be delivered and managed.

A Steering Committee comprising local councils, the Food Bowl Alliance, interested groups and the broader community would be established as soon as possible to guide the further development of the project.

A new 70 kilometre pipeline connecting Melbourne to the Goulburn River would be built by 2010 to allow Melbourne to access its share of the savings. Sufficient renewable energy will be purchased to offset the anticipated 10 megawatts of electricity required to pump the water to Melbourne.

Taking this opportunity to ensure the future prosperity of the region through major new investment in modernising ageing infrastructure to create a world class irrigation system. Upgrading the Goulburn Murray irrigation system was a project of national significance and provided the opportunity for the State and Commonwealth to work together.

The \$1 billion upgrade to generate the first 225 billion litres of new water is not subject to Commonwealth funding.

A feasibility study investigating a new channel connecting the Murray Valley and Goulburn Valley systems would also be finalised as part of this project.

### **Recycling**

The business case for the Eastern Water Recycling Project to provide recycled water to the LaTrobe Valley for power generation would also be expanded.

Other opportunities for recycled water will be identified following the \$300 million upgrade to the Eastern Treatment Plant to be completed in 2012.

The business case, to be completed in 2008, will also examine measures to reduce water demand in the power industry to secure their water supply.

The proposal to use stormwater from Dights Falls in the Yarra River would not proceed after a feasibility study found it would not provide enough water to justify the \$1 billion cost.

### **Interim Water Supplies**

Interim measures over the next five years to secure water supplies include:

3

- 15 billion litres a year by reconnecting Tarago Reservoir to Melbourne's water supply;
- 20 billion litres a year by reducing flows to the Yarra and Thompson Rivers if Melbourne goes to Stage 4 restrictions;
- 13 billion litres a year from mandatory measures for the largest 1500 industrial water users and other industry programs; and
- Over 100 billion litres a year from existing household and industry water saving initiatives.

Pricing proposals now being developed by water authorities would reflect existing infrastructure plans for water and sewerage increased recycling, and conservation programs, as well as the major water projects announced.

Average water bills in Melbourne, currently at least 20 per cent lower than any other any capital city, are expected to double over the next five years, with the desalination plant and Sugarloaf pipeline accounting for almost half the increase.

The pricing proposals from water authorities will be overseen by the Essential Services Commission, the independent price regulator, who will undertake community consultation on the new prices from September.

### **Great Water Saving Packs for Ballarat and District Customers**

Central Highlands Water is distributing a comprehensive water-saving pack to all customers in the Ballarat and District Water Supply, as part of its' water saving campaign to help Ballarat residents cut their water usage to 150 litres of water per person per day.

The Central Highlands Water water-saving pack is individually tailored for each customer and will contain customer's first individual Monthly Water Usage Statement, a Personal Water Usage Chart and a free water-saving DVD.

The water saving packs will help the Ballarat community implement further water saving initiatives.

The informative water saving packs enable residents to keep track of their water saving achievements and focuses each customer on reducing their water consumption to 150 litres per person per day.

The Monthly Water Usage Statement allows customers to keep track of their individual water savings progress and calculate how many litres of water their household is using per person per day.

The Statement will also include the latest information about water resources, a message regarding the individual customer's water savings achievements for the month, a table indicating the amount of water used in the household each month, a graph indicating the daily average water use for the month and information about the Monthly Water Saving Action.

The Water Usage Statement will be distributed each month to all customers in the Ballarat and District Water Supply.

To provide Ballarat and District customers with monthly water usage statements Central Highlands Water has contracted seven additional water meter readers.

The Monthly Water Usage Statement is not a bill and Central Highlands Water will continue to distribute accounts at the normal scheduled times.

The Personal Water Usage Chart enables customers to keep track of their monthly water-savings progress by charting their average monthly personal water usage on a handy graph.

The free Water Saving DVD, produced by Central Highlands Water with the support of the City of Ballarat, showcases how to save water at home and will assist residents to implement water-efficient practices.

The Central Highlands Water saving packs will be distributed to the 45,000 properties in the Ballarat and District Water Supply.

### **Mt Buller Reaches New Heights in Snow Making**

The Mt Buller's \$3.43 million waste water recycling plant upgrade, which will produce up to 90 million litres of high grade recycled water for snowmaking each year was complete. Testing and commissioning of the plant will now begin and recycled water is expected to be available for snowmaking by September.

This is a great example of sustainable resource management that saves water and benefits the local economy and the environment. It will reduce the volume of water diverted from local streams for snowmaking and reduce the volume of treated effluent going into the Howqua River. The project is being jointly funded by the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board and the Victorian Water Trust. The Victorian Water Trust has invested \$1 million in the scheme and Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board is contributing \$2.43 million. Up to 90 million litres of Class A recycled water would be produced each year for snowmaking and for use in toilet flushing.

The Board of Management at Mt Hotham is also well advanced with a recycling scheme that will produce high quality water for snow making.

4

Victorian resorts were world leaders in recycling for snow making and European resort operators were monitoring the Victorian projects. It's believed the Victorian resorts will be the first in the world to use recycled water for snow making.

The reality is that climate change is with us and it may in the long-run have an impact on the tourism industry in the Victorian Alps, but by putting in infrastructure like waste treatment and water recycling, the resorts can respond to the challenge.

The Alpine resorts contributed to the prosperity of regional Victoria. In winter the resorts generate almost 10,000 jobs. The resorts contribute around \$505 million to state gross product.

### **EPHC Communiqué** **National Guidelines for Water Recycling - Phase Two**

At the meeting of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC) on 2 June 2007, Ministers approved a draft set of national guidelines dealing with recycled water for drinking for public consultation, subject to its endorsement by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)

A world first, the guidelines will provide a scientific basis to facilitate the safe use of recycled water for drinking in proposed and future schemes. The draft, on which public comment will be sought for three months, does not promote or endorse schemes, but describes the safeguards that are needed in order to protect public health and the environment.

This set of guidelines is one of three modules comprising Phase Two of the Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling, being developed as part of the National Water Initiative. Phase One was endorsed by environment, natural resource management and health ministers in November 2006. The draft recycled water for drinking guidelines describes how to apply the risk management framework outlined in Phase One to the specific use of recycled water for drinking.

Ministers agreed to request that the NHMRC urgently consider this matter, in light of the severe drought facing many parts of Australia, and to support jurisdictions such as Queensland, which is fast tracking recycled water for drinking.

### **Recycled Water - Discussion Paper Released**

The discussion paper, *Using Recycled Water for Drinking Purposes*, has been released.

The paper:

Is part of the National Water Commission's *Waterlines* series of papers, clearly states that it is essential that all water supply options are considered in order to find the most effective combination to secure water for our cities.

Encourages the objective and even-handed consideration of recycled water for drinking as one option for communities to augment their water supplies and to enhance their water security.

Provides an accessible overview of the national and international experience of indirect and direct potable re-use and can be used to assist communities when they are considering the option of sourcing recycled water for drinking purposes.

The study indicates that the risk associated with recycled water for drinking is manageable.

The paper was prepared for the National Water Commission by GHD Pty Ltd as a contribution to the national debate about the use of recycled water for drinking.

[View Paper](#)

### **News.com.au**

#### **Checkout relief tipped after rains**

Families could pay less for their Christmas dinner this year as the drought eases throughout New South Wales, State Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald said today.

Announcing the best drought figures since May last year, Mr Macdonald today said a bumper winter crop had been planted and if harvested food prices should fall "by Christmas".

"Farmers have planted a record crop ... the highest since 1983," Mr Macdonald said in Sydney today.

"If this crop can be harvested later in the year following follow-up rain ... we could see an easing in the prices of foodstuff in NSW.

"Meat, pork, poultry and eggs would all ease."

Mr Macdonald said three million hectares of wheat would be sown in NSW this year – double last year's harvested area.

A good wheat crop will cause food prices to fall as wheat is the main feed for the meat and poultry industries.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has increased its overall crop estimate to 5.08 million ha for the 2007 winter crop.

"The late April break has allowed 96 per cent of the 5.08 million hectares to be sown," Mr Macdonald said.

5

"Farmers have a higher level of morale and are out there planting crops."

The latest DPI figures show the area of the state in drought has dropped below 70 per cent at 69.9 per cent.

The figure is down from 80.3 per cent last month and 93.2 per cent in January.

The July figures are based on rainfall in June, and with the state experiencing further widespread rain in recent weeks, the August figures are expected to show an even bigger improvement.

But Mr Macdonald warned the drought had not broken yet.

"We will need some further rains throughout the winter period and spring to ensure that we get this massive crop to harvest," he said.

The NSW Farmers Association said the drought figures were heading in the right direction.

"What we've got to do is hope that the changed weather pattern continues going down this path and we do keep getting rain on a regular basis so we can gradually ease our way out of this drought," association president Jock Laurie said.

"It always helps when you get the crop in the ground and get it up and growing on some pretty good moisture."

However, while the "weather drought" was easing, the "financial drought" - following six dry years - was still hurting NSW farmers, Mr Laurie said.

Mr Macdonald said the state's dams also were filling up again.

Burrinjuck Dam in the south of the state is 34 per cent full, while Chaffey Dam near Tamworth is at 27 per cent capacity. Sydney's dams are currently at 56.8 per cent capacity.

But irrigators in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys still face zero water allocations this season.

That would be re-assessed on a month-by-month basis, Mr Macdonald said today.

Prime Minister John Howard said the recent rains were fantastic and the promise of falling food prices was great news for the public.

"But there is still a long way to go. Over 70 per cent of NSW is still in drought and I don't think we should celebrate too soon," he told reporters in Sydney today.

"Let's not forget the rest of the country. Parts of Western Australia are still very dry, and there are still parts of NSW that haven't had much rain and parts of Queensland as well."

16<sup>th</sup>

### **FarmOnline**

#### **Labor's grocery policy 'a taxpayer-funded talk fest': Boswell**

Labor's new policy to hold a taxpayer-funded talkfest on supermarket pricing was a hollow, populist election stunt, and a waste of money, according to Leader of The Nationals in the Senate, Ron Boswell.

"Australian families know that just talking about retail prices for groceries is not going to bring prices down," Senator Boswell said.

"Kevin Rudd knows that grocery prices are already monitored extensively by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the ACCC, the competition watch dog.

"Expensive, populist stunts like this one will only serve to further disqualify Labor as a credible alternative government.

"The issues that need to be addressed here are competition and market power of the big two supermarkets.

"The only way to bring prices down is to encourage more competition and independent operators in the grocery sector, and for Australian shoppers to change their habits to support them."

Senator Boswell said that Australian consumers were clearly attracted to the convenience of the full-range 'one stop shop' major supermarkets. But they ultimately had to decide whether the convenience was worth the cost.

"Shoppers can save significantly on groceries by buying direct from a wholesaler, by shopping at a local, independent grocery, fruit and vegetable or butcher shop, or, where possible, by buying direct from an Australian farmer, who is paid a fraction of the price for his product that the consumer pays, on average, at a major supermarket," Senator Boswell said.

"The market power of the major supermarket chains created and maintained through huge marketing, real-estate and consumer research budgets, efficient logistics, large volume buying and tight controls on product appearance and specification, means that they consistently hold over 70pc of the Australian grocery market.

"It is self-perpetuating and concerning.

"But we live in a free country where people are allowed to buy what they choose from whom they choose to buy it, at a price they are prepared to pay."

Senator Boswell said that the Coalition Government had recently introduced new legislation to amend the Trade Practices Act to better address the issues of misuse of market power and unconscionable conduct by big businesses.

6

"The new laws, which have been developed by Australian business, the Treasurer and I, are a significant step toward tipping the competition balance back to small independent businesses, encouraging more competition in our markets, including the grocery market."

SOURCE: *Queensland County Life* weekly newspaper, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **Failure to build major dam key to water crisis**

The cancellation of Queensland's Wolfedene Dam 18 years ago increasingly is being recognised as a major contributor to the current southeast Queensland water crisis.

The Nationals' Member for Lockyer, Ian Rickuss, says southeast Queensland's water crisis can be sheeted home to an era that saw the cancellation of the Wolfedene dam.

Speaking in the Qld Parliament last month, he said, "This has turned out to be a crazy situation... it's a mistake the Labour government made."

The proposed dam was just southwest of Brisbane, not far from the earlier, successful Hinze Dam, in the foothills of the ranges running south to the Qld-NSW border, built by an earlier National Party administration.

The Wolfedene dam site was ready to go ahead when the Goss Labor Government was campaigning prior to coming into power in 1989.

But when he came to power, Premier Wayne Goss decided not to proceed with the Wolfedene dam, following anti-dam protests.

Mr Rickuss says, "If the government had built some of this (water) infrastructure at an earlier stage, we would actually be nowhere near the situation we are in now.

"Now, the Qld Government is relying on water recycling plans to get south-east Qld through the current crisis."

His comments follow those made in Federal Parliament, by Bruce Scott, member for the Qld electorate of Maranoa, on May 24.

Mr Scott said, "At that time the (now) Leader of the Opposition—Kevin Rudd, the member for Griffith—was the adviser to Premier Wayne Goss.

"He was also secretary to Cabinet when the decision was taken not to proceed with the Wolfedene Dam project in south-east Queensland.

"They not only abandoned what was the best site for a dam in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales and south-east Queensland, but they then allowed that land to be sold for a housing development."

According to Mr Scott there are now something like 4,000 houses on that site, so the site is no longer suitable for a dam.

SOURCE: Extract from, *Queensland Country Life*, July 12, and *FarmOnline*

### **Petitions flood in against Vic water pipeline**

A petition opposing a proposed 70-kilometre pipeline linking Victoria's Goulburn Valley to Melbourne's Sugarloaf Reservoir, is gaining momentum.

Member for Benalla, Bill Sykes, said his office had already received anti-pipeline petitions with more than 5,500 signatures.

Petitions with "thousands more signatures" were expected to flood in during the next few days.

Meanwhile a WIN TV viewer opinion poll reportedly has 9pc against the pipeline and 4pc for the pipeline.

It follows anti-pipeline rallies at Kerang, Vic, and Shepparton, Vic, earlier this week.

Kerang rally organiser and Cohuna, Vic, dairy farmer, John Keely said rural communities supported the \$2.2 billion plan to upgrade the aging Goulburn Murray irrigator infrastructure.

But they did not accept that the only way to fund the work was by giving away a slice of the water savings.

SOURCE: Extract of breaking news from report and analysis to be published in *Stock & Land*, Vic, July 12.

### **Water marketplace set to trade**

Australia's biggest marketplace for water is set to change hands for \$10.75 million.

NSX Ltd has announced plans to acquire Australia's largest independent water market operator, The Water exchange Pty Ltd, through the issue of 25 million NSX shares at 43 cents.

NSX already operates the National Stock Exchange set up for small to medium businesses and the Bendigo Stock Exchange.

SOURCE: Extract of breaking news from report and analysis to be published in *Stock & Land*, Vic, July 12.

### **Wimmera water levels double since April**

Although water levels within the Wimmera-Mallee catchment system remain at a paltry 7.2pc of capacity, the heartening news is that storage levels have doubled from their April low of just 3.5pc.



Last week to Wednesday, July 11 was the biggest run-off week for the year, with 10,730 megalitres flowing into catchments after downpours of to 100mm in the Grampians.

7

It triggers a milestone for water authority Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water – with a figure of 7pc necessary to supply all towns that have channelled water.

It is a relief for the water authority, who have been forced to truck water to Wycheproof and build a desalination plant at Donald if the figure was not reached.

If the strong in-flows continue – and reports suggest there is still water flowing into the catchments – and a figure of 10pc is reached by the end of July, there will even be a channel fill of farm dams, at a rate of one dam per farm.

Last year there was no rural dam fill.

The run-off is not confined to the official catchments. Many farm dams in undulating areas have filled, which will ease the pressure on the channelled supply.

SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, weekly rural newspaper, Victoria, posting breaking news daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **Climate change speeds up grain innovation**

The need for new varieties and on-farm practices in the grains industry, to meet global market pressures and climate constraints, will underpin new research and development priorities for the next five years.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) this week, launched "Prosperity through Innovation".

This is its strategic blueprint for 2007-2012, acknowledging climate change as one of the major challenges to continuing the immense productivity gains achieved by the industry in the past 15-20 years. GRDC chairman, Terry Enright, said the new strategic approach refines the work and projects undertaken by GRDC in the past, into four main areas:

- Better varieties.
- Better on-farm practices.
- New products.
- Communication and capacity building.

Mr Enright said, "What we've identified is the importance of speed of adoption.

"There are known technologies out there that can increase productivity - they need to be adopted, and the more quickly the better."

In the performance of plants, water use efficiency remains a big part of all breeding programs in all crops. Climate change may mean that some areas are going to be drier.

"We need more work to determine whether it is or not," he said.

"But we're always suffering relative drought in Australia, so a big emphasis in the breeding program has got to be water use efficiency.

"In addition, what we're facing, and is generally accepted, is that Co2 levels are higher and the effects of that is a focus of a lot of attention right across government and industry."

Mr Enright said other challenges facing the grains industry included:

- The shifts in production in the Black Sea region in Europe, which is close to a lot of Australia's traditional markets.
- The advances in technology in crops in North America and Canada.

SOURCE: National grain news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **The Australian**

#### **Polluters first for carbon credits**

Australia's heaviest polluters will be given approval to immediately invest in green technologies and bank future carbon credits, under plans to establish a national emissions trading scheme from 2011.

Companies may also earn carbon credits if they invest in developing markets overseas, such as China and Indonesia, as part of a longer-term goal to establish Australia as a regional hub for carbon trading.

In a determined bid to turn around the Coalition's electoral fortunes, John Howard will this week outline the key elements of a national emissions trading scheme, to come into effect from 2011.

The Prime Minister will seek to revive the Coalition's faltering election hopes by outlining plans to further develop low emissions technologies in key sectors such as coal.

And he will challenge the Labor states to get behind a national scheme, asking the premiers to work on plans to cut red tape and streamline existing climate change systems.

Mr Howard - who calls himself a climate change realist - has been forced to act decisively on the critical issue amid concerns that he was being outflanked by Labor leader Kevin Rudd.

The move on climate change comes as cabinet ministers meet in Canberra today to map out an election battleplan - and try to halt Labor's surging lead in the polls.

But nervous government MPs told The Australian yesterday they were worried Labor was outspending the Coalition in key marginal seats, blanketing the electorates with television and newspaper advertisements.

8

"A key problem is we haven't got the money that Labor seems to have," one marginal seat MP said.

"We just don't seem to have the money to match Labor."

Another MP said the Government had to do more to challenge Labor on "barbecue stopper" issues such as housing affordability and petrol prices.

The Prime Minister also faced another bout of internal Liberal Party division in NSW yesterday, following a controversial preselection contest for the safe seat of Cook. Michael Towke, a candidate aligned to the party's hard-Right faction, won the contest on Saturday, provoking outrage from leading "moderates" and claims that Labor could now make a serious challenge to win the southern Sydney electorate.

Mr Howard refused to buy into the internal warfare, saying he had phoned Mr Towke on Saturday to congratulate him on the win.

The Prime Minister announced plans to outline an emissions trading regime "specific to Australia's economic circumstances" during his weekly radio address.

It will build on the report delivered by the Prime Minister's taskforce on emissions trading on June 1, which recommended a cautious but comprehensive approach to a national carbon trading scheme.

Mr Howard said a longer-term goal for Australia was to become a "regional carbon trading hub". This will be discussed by the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit, to be held in Sydney in September.

Potentially, it would allow Australia's biggest polluters to claim carbon credits if they invested in forestry in Indonesia or clean coal technology in China.

As senior bureaucrats work closely with business on the design of a national emissions trading scheme, Mr Howard promised incentives for firms to "undertake abatement" in the lead-up to the 2011 commencement of the scheme.

This will provide encouragement for firms to start investing now in eco-friendly technologies - or to plant forests in a bid to generate carbon sinks - knowing that those investments will count when the trading scheme begins.

Behind in the polls, the Coalition is trying to portray Labor's climate change approach as radical and one that will place economic prosperity at risk.

"By contrast to our practical approach, Kevin Rudd has an irresponsible plan to set an emissions reduction target without any understanding of its economic impact," Mr Howard said.

"He is happy to risk damage to the economy in pursuit of Green voting preferences at the next election."

Mr Howard yesterday boasted that the APEC summit would bring together the world's two biggest polluters - China and the US - to discuss climate change issues.

He said Australia was using its "regional status to encourage an international approach to addressing climate change". But while Mr Howard is hoping APEC - with its cavalcade of regional leaders from the US, Japan, Russia, China, Canada, Mexico and Indonesia - will deliver some much-needed momentum, other Government MPs are not so sure.

"It might turn out to be a negative for us," one MP said, citing the presence of the deeply unpopular US President George W. Bush - a noted climate change sceptic - as a turn-off for voters.

#### **AdelaideNow**

#### **Tougher water restrictions to start**

Level 3 water restrictions come into force today as record low inflows to the River Murray have led to rapidly-falling storage levels.

Premier Mike Rann said people would only be able to use sprinklers in their gardens for six hours a week on either a Saturday or Sunday, bringing SA "broadly in line with restrictions currently in place in other states".

"While I'm pleased many South Australians are heeding the message to reduce their watering habits, this severe nationwide drought looks set to roll on through a very hot summer," Mr Rann said yesterday.

"Much more needs to be done to save the little water we have allocated to us."

SA was allocated only eight per cent of the water extracted from the Murray River, with 92 per cent taken out upstream, he said.

Under the new enhanced Level Three water restrictions, sprinkler systems can be used on one day a week for three hours in the morning or evening – even numbered houses 5am to 8am and 8pm to 11pm on Saturday and the same hours for odd numbered properties on a Sunday.

Hand-held hoses fitted with trigger nozzle or drip watering systems can only be used before 8am or after 8pm any day. Currently these can be used at any time.

Sprinkler systems can only be used once a week between 8pm and 8am on sporting grounds.

"While these restrictions are much more onerous, we believe they are in sensible proportion to the drought conditions we face at present," Mr Rann said.

9

"After the driest winter on record and with the lowest inflows on record into the River Murray, our water situation is serious."

Mr Rann said people who did not comply with the new restrictions would first receive a warning, but subsequent abuses would result in fines.

17<sup>th</sup>

### **FarmOnline**

#### **More Far North Qld rivers to be locked up**

Seven more Far North Queensland rivers will be locked up under the Beattie Government's 'wild rivers' laws in 2007/08, but the Natural Resources Minister won't say which rivers and when the declarations are likely to take effect. During State Budget Estimates hearings, Opposition natural resources spokesman, Ray Hopper, questioned Minister Craig Wallace about which seven rivers he proposed to lock up this year and whether he would compensate affected landholders. But Mr Hopper claims he received no straight answers from Mr Wallace.

"The Beattie Labor Government has already locked up and prevented any development around six Queensland rivers, including Settlement Creek, Morning Inlet, the Gregory River and Staaten River in the Gulf," Mr Hopper said.

"The declarations of these rivers was a drawn out process because of the shoddy way the Beattie Labor Government drafted its laws, their failure to properly consult with local landholders and the fact the maps they produced were riddled with errors.

"Indigenous leaders in particular have been angered at the way the Beattie Labor Government's ill-conceived 'wild rivers' laws are taking away economic development opportunities that could help get their local people off welfare.

"With the guillotine now hanging over another seven rivers and the Minister refusing to say when the axe will fall and where, Far North Queensland landholders, the mining industry, indigenous communities and the rural sector face more uncertainty and another battle for their economic survival."

Mr Hopper backed the Federal Government's northern taskforce, which is looking at growth opportunities at the top of Australia.

"It is important that areas of environmental significance are protected, but sustainable development must be allowed to occur at the same time," he said.

SOURCE: *North Queensland Register*, weekly rural newspaper, posting news updates on *FarmOnline*.

#### **NFF signs up to Govt climate change program**

The National Farmers' Federation has signed on as a member of the Greenhouse Challenge Plus Program in a bid to strengthen its ability to influence climate change policy.

NFF president David Crombie says the Federal Government program will give recognition to farmers' ability in developing and implementing sustainable policy solutions to the threat of climate change.

"Australian farmers are acutely aware that an increasingly variable climate has the potential to threaten not only their livelihoods, but their productive capacity in providing Australians with the clean, green food and fibre they consume every day," Mr Crombie said.

"As a facilitative partner to the Australian Government's Greenhouse Challenge Plus Programme, the NFF has created the platform for demonstrating to the market the proactive nature of our sector and the technological advances and practical steps farmers have already taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and, at the same time, bolster the Australian economy.

"The program will see the NFF form partnerships with the Australian Government to educate, inform and provide practical advice to farmers about their ability to implement positive and commercially-viable greenhouse solutions on their properties."

The NFF has established a Climate Change Working Group to focus on adaptation strategies to further build resilience into agricultural systems, mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse emissions, and viable frameworks and markets for emissions trading. The NFF says the Working Group will also examine research and development systems to enhance agriculture's capacity to respond to climate change. It will gather and disseminate information for primary producers and rural communities to make informed decisions for their businesses.

"Over the past 15 years, Australian farmers have led primary industries in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40pc – through halting land clearing, developing new farm technologies, implementing natural resource management practices and planting over 20 million trees-a-year solely for conservation purposes," Mr Crombie said. "This partnership will enable farmers to further their efforts in identifying opportunities, as well as identifying problems, to proactively deliver workable solutions in conjunction with the Australian Government." SOURCE: NFF and *FarmOnline*

10

### **Ord River expansion non-negotiable: Nationals WA**

The Nationals WA leader Brendon Grylls has promised an immediate \$200 million investment in the Ord River Irrigation Scheme if his party gains the balance of power at the next State election.

Mr Grylls was speaking in Broome, where Nationals' MPs from around Australia have gathered for a policy think tank by the beach. The issue of stage two of the Ord project was discussed ahead of the WA branch's policy announcement.

"There is now great uncertainty about the proposed Ord stage two expansion and no commitment from the State or Federal governments that the required public infrastructure will be built," Mr Grylls said.

"Significant funding is required to elevate the Ord River Scheme into a world-class integrated food, fibre and energy supplier.

"The region has great potential but it desperately needs core public infrastructure such as roads and power, technical and scientific support, and an upgraded Port of Wyndham."

He estimates the price tag for essential improvements to the Kununurra-Wyndham Road and the Weaber Plain Road, as well as internal access roads and bridges for stage two, would be up to \$180m. Under the policy, The Nationals would immediately release an additional 16,000 hectares of stage two land to private investors and lift the State's moratorium on genetically modified cotton.

"Enabling stage two proponents to invest in crops such as insect-resistant cotton would dramatically accelerate development of the Ord Valley," Mr Grylls said.

**AWA**

The Murray Darling Basin Commission is to set up a panel of expert water consultants on call for a National Water Accounting Development Project overseen by a water accounting department committee under the National Water Initiative guidelines, to work out just how much usable water there is in habitable parts of Australia.

The Queensland University of Technology's Dr Wayne Martens has received a Smart State Fellowship to further his research into Nano-Technology for water purification. This process uses photo catalytic water treatment to break down organic chemicals such as pesticides, pharmaceuticals and hormones, suitable for uses ranging from ultra-pure water for the electronic industry to irrigation.

Australia must develop a catchment management mentality to successfully manage and optimise its water resources, according to Peter Crawford, former top public servant, water authority head and author. He writes in *ATSE Focus* that now is the right time to redraft the NWI to emphasise the role of catchments, particularly if future decisions on water allocation and use are to be sustainable.

Western Australia's second major desalination plant will be built and operated by private industry and owned by the Water Corporation, based on the same successful private public partnership that delivered the Kwinana plant.

Premier Beattie last week announced the proponents who will investigate and deliver the new infrastructure projects outlined in the Queensland Statewide Water Policy - a range of dams, weirs and pipelines - which will form the regional water grid.

The Victorian Government's Smart Water Fund will soon invite applications for round 5 funding, for innovative water conservation, water recycling and sustainable biosolids management projects for urban Victoria.

David Garman, President of the International Water Association, has commented that diversification of water supply options is required for urban areas, including desalination. At times, this will result in redundancies in order to cope with the increase in variability of water availability.

On-the-spot fines for individuals and businesses that repeatedly ignore water restrictions will be beefed up by a Queensland State Government keen to crackdown on water cheats.

Tilligerry Creek (Port Stephens, NSW) has recovered from faecal pollution which caused the creek to be closed to oyster farming in 2005. Research the University of Newcastle found that faecal contamination was predominantly from agricultural activities and domestic pets, rather than on-site systems in the unsewered catchment. Septic systems in the catchment have been upgraded.

11

Australian Government has granted legal protection to the world's first temperate deep-sea network of marine reserves off the southeast coastline of Australia, a wonderful 226,000 square km resource.

United utilities (UUA) is joining with Spanish water company Acciona Agua to bid for the proposed Melbourne desalination plant and also Perth's planned second desalination plant.

Veolia Water Australia have sponsored 100 'World Water Monitoring Day' kits for use by their staff, combined with local schools and community groups, to participate in the annual event. Veolia Water aims to encourage greater community awareness of the state of local waterways, and for children to learn a little more of the science of water. For more details on the global activity. ([Website](#))

Recent outbreaks of blue green algae in key lakes supplying drinking water to large cities in eastern and south-western China are mainly attributed to pollutants from chemical factories but this time also the finger is being pointed at agricultural fertilizers and causing major problems for treatment plants and local authorities seeking alternative supplies.

Water prices, contestability and the prospect of third party involvement in delivery of water services are again being faced by major utilities such as Sydney Water.

While some councils will pay residents to set up 'grey water' treatment systems, others force ratepayers to endure lengthy waiting times and pay expensive application fees to install them and their attitudes need to change according the Australian Grey Water Institute.

Contracts with the Murray Darling Basin Commission for those interested in assessing how much usable water in available are to be gazetted in Tender Search and will close on 27 July.

In contrast with other areas like SE Queensland and Adelaide, a relaxation of water restrictions in Sydney and scrapping of the proposed desalination plant has been raised by various parties but dismissed by NSW Government despite increases in dam levels.

The orbiting Spitzer space telescope has detected water vapour in the atmosphere of a gas giant, named HD 189733b orbiting a star in the constellation of Vulpecula, the Fox, 64 light years away from Earth.

**news.com.au**

### **Schools to get green vouchers**

Schools will be eligible for "green" vouchers to improve energy and water efficiency in a new program announced by Prime Minister John Howard this morning. Mr Howard said the schools program, part of a larger package to tackle climate change, would cost \$336 million. Watch the PM announce the climate change funding package below.

"Today I am announcing a further \$627 million in practical new measures to tackle global warming, bringing total spending on climate change initiative since 1996 to about \$3.4 billion," he said.

"This will include \$336 million for green vouchers for schools to improve energy and water efficiency.

"Every school in Australia will be eligible for a voucher of up \$50,000 to help install solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks.

"Not only will this help reduce energy and conserve water, but it will provide students and our school communities with a first-hand lesson in how we can act locally to preserve the environment."

Mr Howard said he would also announce an emissions trading system. The Prime Minister said earlier this week the trading scheme would deliver environmental outcomes while maintaining economic competitiveness and protecting jobs in emissions-intensive industries.

"The scheme will include maximum practical coverage of emissions sources and sinks, and all greenhouse gases," Mr Howard said in his weekly radio address last night.

"There will also be incentives for firms to undertake abatement in the lead up to the commencement of the scheme." Mr Howard said today Australian action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions since 1990 will prevent about 87 million tonnes of climate-changing carbon a year entering the atmosphere by 2010.

"I will also be announcing a 'cap and trade' emissions trading system that will help Australia substantially lower our domestic greenhouse gas emissions at the lowest cost," he said.

"Stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will be difficult, but not impossible. We do not have to sacrifice our economic prosperity to tackle the problem."

12

### **Carbon scheme 'will be world's best'**

The carbon trading scheme to be announced by Prime Minister John Howard today will be the most comprehensive and modern program in the world, Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull said.

Mr Turnbull offered few details of the scheme, which will be detailed by Mr Howard in Melbourne later today, but said it would not include a price on carbon.

Without a price on carbon, large polluters will not be penalised by the scheme.

"It's very important to get the (pricing) mechanism right," Mr Turnbull told ABC radio.

"We are learning a great deal from the efforts and the failures and the errors of others and this will be the most comprehensive emissions trading scheme."

Mr Turnbull did say the scheme would allow companies to invest in greenhouse gas abatement programs.

"Credit for early action ... will be provided for."

Early today Mr Howard announced \$336 million in funding for schools to improve energy and water efficiency, and flagged his emissions announcement later today.

"I will also be announcing a 'cap and trade' emissions trading system that will help Australia substantially lower our domestic greenhouse gas emissions at the lowest cost," he said.

"Stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will be difficult, but not impossible. We do not have to sacrifice our economic prosperity to tackle the problem.

"Australia will more than play its part to address climate change, but we will do it in a practical and balanced way, in full knowledge of the economic consequences for our nation."

18<sup>th</sup>

### **FarmOnLine**

#### **Govt carbon plan leaves farmers out in the cold**

The NSW Farmers' Association president, Jock Laurie, has used his official address to annual conference to call on the Federal Government to include agriculture in its carbon emissions plans, and recognise what farmers have already achieved.

"As an industry we need to not be scared to get involved in the Global Warming debate," he said.

"We'll fight so we're not left out of the equation.

"The Prime Minister has endorsed the carbon market design recommended by the Taskforce on emissions trading.

"But this design shields the energy sector.

"It shifts the costs of meeting emissions targets onto ordinary consumers and farmers.

"The Government can talk about reductions in emissions in Australia, but this reduction was primarily due to clearing laws that prevented farmers from developing their land.

"This saving was achieved at zero cost to government and a cost of billions of dollars to family farmers," Mr Laurie said.

SOURCE: NSW Farmers Association

### **Less than 70pc of NSW in drought**

Signs the drought's grip on NSW is finally weakening are beginning to appear with figures released by the State Government showing 69.6pc of NSW is in drought.

The July drought figures are the best in more than a year and reflected a real change in fortune for the State's farmers.

The figures show:

- The area of NSW in drought has fallen from 80.3pc to 69.6pc.
- The area classified as marginal is 10.8pc (up from 10.4pc) and the satisfactory area is 19.6pc (up from 9.3pc).

In June, the eastern half of the State generally received falls of 25mm or greater.

However, the western half of NSW missed out, receiving less than 25mm.

The top June recordings were at Murrurundi (181mm), Braidwood (211mm), Condobolin (60.6mm), Moree (50mm), Albury (31.9mm), Cowra (59mm) and Narrabri (94mm).

The storm which lashed the Hunter and Central Coast saw June recordings at Singleton reach 250mm for the month.

As a result, the whole Maitland Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB) is now considered satisfactory.

Those areas that missed out are now pinning their hopes on good falls in July to help sustain winter crops.

Cobar recorded just 13mm of rain in June and Tibooburra only 1.2mm.

SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW's weekly rural newspaper, with breaking news updated daily by *FarmOnline*.

13

### **Dryland cotton hopes high**

Slightly improved moisture and price profiles, coupled with farming systems refinements, have prompted renewed interest in dryland cotton.

Major variety distributor, Cotton Seed Distributors, has included 12 dryland varieties in its 2007 variety guide.

They include a comprehensive suite of Bollgard Roundup Ready Flex, Bollgard Roundup Ready, Roundup Ready Flex, Roundup Ready, Liberty Link and conventional varieties.

These varieties will suit growers in all dryland summer cropping regions of NSW and Qld.

CSD extension and development agronomist, Rob Eveleigh, says recent Bureau of Meteorology analysis suggests cotton growers can be more optimistic about future rainfall prospects, with computer models predicting a La Niña forming during winter.

The SOI has risen sharply, the trade winds are much stronger than average and the cloud cover in the Pacific near the equator has been consistently below normal during June.

These are all positive indicators for a possible La Niña, he says.

Fellow CSD agronomist, James Quinn, says the positive trend in world cotton prices is due to tighter domestic supplies and increased domestic demand in China.

Projections of slightly lower world production and an increase in mill use has contributed, too, triggering a rebound in world trade, leading to lower world stocks.

SOURCE: *Australian Cotton Outlook*, updated on *FarmOnline*

### **The Daily Telegraph Stewards of the planet**

Over time, the scientific evidence that the climate is warming has become compelling. The link between emissions of greenhouse gases from human activity and higher temperatures is also convincing.

Contrary to the claims of some, Australia has long been an active player in the search for an efficient, effective and equitable solution to climate change. Of all the inhabited continents, Australia already has the driest and most variable climate. Climate change means our water security problems will likely intensify, which is why this Government has invested so heavily in national water reform. Our great and unique natural ecosystems, like the Great Barrier Reef, are potentially threatened. And many of our major industries - not least agriculture - are highly sensitive to changes in the climate.

Because of our natural abundance of fossil fuels, Australia's economic prosperity is also threatened if our response to climate change is misguided and driven by ideology. A prudent conservative knows we are but temporary stewards of the environment. The Burkean sentiment - that society is a partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are yet to be born - comes as second nature.

In the face of risk, a prudent conservative takes insurance. We should, in the words of Rupert Murdoch, give the planet the benefit of the doubt given the potential dangers of climate change.

Now we must position Australia for a low carbon future. We face a major new reform challenge in designing an emissions trading system and setting a long-term goal for reducing our emissions in the absence of a global carbon scheme.

These decisions will be among the most important Australia takes in the next decade. They need to be taken carefully and rationally with a clear eye to maintaining our economic strength.

Reducing carbon emissions will mean higher energy and petrol prices. Australians need to understand that. Glib calls for drastic, immediate cuts in Australia's emissions might be easy rhetoric for opportunistic politicians but they carry real and potentially large costs to our economy.

The best way to combat global climate change is to progressively tighten the screws on emissions while encouraging clean technologies for an energy hungry world.

Notwithstanding some of the fear and self-loathing that has crept into this debate, four fundamental realities remain:

First, climate change requires a truly global response. With Australia's contribution to global emissions at less than 1.5 per cent and falling, nothing we do alone will materially affect our climate.

Second, we must accommodate Australia's demands for economic development, energy security and environmental sustainability. Without all three you are left - at best - with a two-legged stool.

Third, different countries will choose different approaches. National diversity - in different stages of development, economic growth, demography and natural resource endowments - must be harnessed.

Fourth, the Kyoto Protocol is not an effective blueprint for future action. It provides no pathway for meaningful commitments by the very countries which will account for the bulk of future greenhouse gas emissions.

#### 14

The good news is that mankind has powerful tools for the task ahead, none more so than the spirit of discovery inspired and channelled by those bulwarks of human progress: rational science and free markets.

The false prophets are those preaching Malthusian pessimism or anti-capitalism. They are the real climate change deniers because they deny or obscure rational, realistic and sustainable policy solutions.

A moralising tone of utopian internationalism is not particularly helpful either. Institutions will only work and endure if they harness national interests. The world needs less Woodrow Wilson and more Adam Smith to effectively tackle climate change.

Stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will require a deep transformation of the world's energy systems. It will be hard, but it is possible

We do not have to sacrifice economic prosperity. We do not have to rethink capitalism. Indeed, markets will drive any solution.

But we do need to engage the community. We do need massive worldwide investment in low carbon infrastructure. And we do need a far-reaching new phase of economic reform here at home to establish a world-class emissions trading system.

One thing is certain. The world will only develop the clean technologies of tomorrow and successfully reduce greenhouse gas emissions against a backdrop of economic strength.

On that basis Australia will more than play its part.

**Couriermail.com.au**

**Green cash lures voters**

Households are being showered with thousands of dollars to Go Green in a series of carefully targeted election-year handouts by the Federal Government.

And every school will be offered up to \$50,000 to install solar hot-water systems and a rainwater tank.

Prime Minister John Howard yesterday announced households earning under \$100,000 would be entitled to an additional \$1000 rebate to convert to eco-friendly solar hot-water systems.

The pledge comes on top of an \$8000 rebate for 22,000 homes to install solar panels and existing renewable energy certificates worth up to \$900 to encourage households to make the switch to solar water.

It follows \$200 million in the May Budget for the installation of water tanks and other water-saving devices at schools and community groups.



St Kevin's Primary at Geebung is one school set to benefit from the plan. Principal Carmel Bailli says the school will apply for the maximum grant to help save the drought-affected playgrounds.

In a bid to breathe new life into his flagging re-election prospects, Mr Howard took to the popular youth internet site YouTube to unveil the Government's \$627 million policy to combat climate change.

But green groups and Labor accused the Government of not going far enough and letting polluters off the hook.

Mr Howard said he would deliver Australia a "low-carbon future" without devastating economic consequences.

But he warned reducing carbon emissions would mean higher energy and petrol prices and he committed the Government to pursuing nuclear energy pledging \$12.5 million to research.

Mr Howard also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the introduction of a carbon-trading scheme, but unlike Labor, which has committed to a 60 per cent reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2050, he refused to set a long-term target.

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd said an emissions-trading scheme needed a target and a carbon price to be successful. Labor is offering loans of up to \$10,000 to make homes more energy and water efficient. The low-interest loans would be offered to up to 200,000 households to buy water and electricity-saving products, such as solar panels and rainwater tanks.

Greenpeace energy campaigner Catherine Fitzpatrick said it was becoming increasingly hard to take the Prime Minister's stand on climate change seriously.

"Although there are some worthy elements in the Prime Minister's announcement, where is the real vision and leadership needed to genuinely move Australians away from climate change?" Ms Fitzpatrick said.

"If you read between the lines of the Prime Minister's speech, the clear signal being sent is that it is business-as-usual for the large industrial coal polluters."

#### **Herald Sun**

#### **Green plan at a cost**

John Howard has bluntly warned consumers face higher petrol and power bills under Australia's historic climate change reforms. But the Prime Minister ordered that any costs to households be kept to a minimum.

Mr Howard yesterday detailed further plans in the fight against global warming, including \$627 million in new measures.

15

The Government plans to force most businesses into an emissions trading scheme to start no later than 2012.

Mr Howard also added fuel to the nuclear debate by committing research funds to aid the industry in Australia.

He conceded the inevitable, that consumers would be paying a high price for cleaning up the environment. But it was too soon to say how much prices would rise, Mr Howard said.

"Reducing carbon emissions will mean higher energy and petrol prices," he told the Melbourne Press Club.

"Australians need to understand that."

But Mr Howard has told Treasury bureaucrats to come up with a consumer-friendly response before setting targets for cutting pollution.

A series of major developments on the environment was revealed, including:

MOST Australian businesses face being forced into the new "cap-and-trade" scheme, where companies will need permits to account for their annual emissions.

\$627 MILLION in new spending, including green vouchers for schools to improve energy and water efficiency.

A \$12.5 MILLION investment in a nuclear research program.

AN extra \$1000 per household for up to 225,000 homes to upgrade to solar hot water systems. Those households earning less than \$100,000 will be eligible.

A LONG-TERM target to cut emissions will be set up in 2008 and will be enforced for up to 40 years.

THE Government's plans were aired for the first time on the internet YouTube site.

THE cut in emissions will start slowly and then increase as the years pass.

Under the Government's planned emissions trading scheme, a series of short-term annual caps will be set from 2011 to 2020.

Companies will need to hold enough permits to account for their emissions or they will have to pay a fee. The Government said permits would be placed in an auction system as well as some free allocations. Trading would also occur if firms were able to dramatically cut their emissions. Agricultural industries initially would be exempted.

Mr Howard said there would be inevitable costs to consumers and warned against believing otherwise. "And I'm not going to pretend that there isn't some additional cost," he said.

Mr Howard was out and about yesterday selling his green credentials, including a visit to Christian Brothers College in St Kilda to discuss his school grants.

The PM also inspected two rainwater tanks that had been installed at the school.

"I've had a look at your water tanks and I am impressed that you save 500,000 litres a year," Mr Howard said.

Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett dismissed the Government's plan.

"It will be very difficult to see how an effective national emissions trading scheme can be put in place without a commitment by the Howard Government to the long-term reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in Australia," Mr Garrett said.

"That's something Mr Howard seems to be allergic to even in the midst of his climate change makeover."

The Australian Conservation Foundation said the emissions trading system had to have a reduction target.

"The crucial feature of a cap-and-trade emissions trading scheme is the cap, the target," executive director Don Henry said. "Without a target, there is no certainty for business and no certainty for the environment."

### **Adelaidenow.com** **Howard on YouTube**

Internet site YouTube emerged as a new force in Australian politics yesterday when Prime Minister John Howard used it for a major policy announcement.

And the Opposition responded with a cutting new advertisement.

Mr Howard used the self-publishing site, which has become a global phenomenon among young people, to announce \$1000 cash grants for solar water heaters for households and to foreshadow further details of his proposed emissions trading scheme. But his efforts to steal a march on the Opposition using the cutting-edge medium were shortlived, with Labor instantly releasing a savage negative advertisement depicting Mr Howard as an old man sleeping though the climate change alarm.

The popularity of the internet heralds a potentially important change in Australian politics and opens the way for YouTube to play a key role in the coming election. In the U.S., where this trend is more advanced, presidential hopefuls Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton both launched their campaigns on the internet and both have used YouTube extensively to raise funds and canvass support. In his first deliberate use of the medium for releasing policy, Mr Howard said every school in Australia would be eligible for funding of up to \$50,000 to convert to solar water heating.

16

"Not only will this help reduce energy and conserve water, but it will provide students and our school communities with a first-hand lesson in how we can act locally to preserve the environment," Mr Howard said.

But recognising the low support for nuclear energy among younger voters, Mr Howard left an announcement about that to a more orthodox speech later in the day.

He said \$12.5 million would be allocated to researching nuclear energy in collaboration with the university sector.

"This will augment Australia's ability to participate in the global Generation IV Nuclear Energy Systems Initiative," he said.

With the details of his emissions trading scheme still to be worked out, Mr Howard said it would be operational by 2011.

He said the scheme would incorporate the widest possible range of emitters and all greenhouse gases.

The scheme would be managed by Mr Howard's own department but an "independent regulator" would be established under the Treasurer's purview.

Polluting industries would initially be given permits and would also be given exceptions if they accidentally exceeded allocated amounts.

Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett dismissed the system as "limp", because it lacked a long-range emissions target.

"What the Prime Minister is trying to do is give a strong message to polluters that there is a 'get out of jail free' clause for them," Mr Garrett said. "I was very disappointed to see Mr Howard continued to bag Kyoto in his speech and to provide very little substance in terms of what he is going to bring forward at APEC."

Labor has committed to a cut in overall emissions of 60 per cent by 2050 but the Government has repeatedly called this target irresponsible.

Labor's advertising campaign, which went to air on commercial television yesterday as well as the internet, shows a bushy-eyebrowed Mr Howard asleep in a decidedly 1950s furnished bedroom, complete with an alarm going off.

"John Howard has been asleep on climate change for the past 11 years," the voice-over begins.

"When the world was waking up to global warming, he refused to ratify Kyoto . . . Howard's asleep on climate change - 11 years, still asleep," it concludes.

**For those who seek more information concerning 'climate change' visit:**

[www.1degree.net.au](http://www.1degree.net.au)

**Adelaidenow**

**\$1000 solar carrot**

More than 200,000 households will be offered a \$1000 incentive to install solar hot water systems, Prime Minister John Howard announced today.

And he has signalled the government's seriousness regarding nuclear power by announcing a \$12.5 million investment in a nuclear collaborative research program between the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology organisation (ANSTO) and Australia's university sector.

Mr Howard said the \$1000 solar hot water incentive was in addition to the \$8,000 rebate for households to install solar panels.

Mr Howard told a Melbourne audience Australia has a crucial role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions,

He said the government's policy on climate change had to be rational, far-sighted and sustainable.

Earlier, he revealed Australia's schools will spearhead a \$627 million plan to save water and energy.

The move was announced in an unprecedented YouTube message from Prime Minister John Howard this morning.

The funding will include \$336 million for green vouchers for schools across the country to improve energy and water efficiency.

"Every school in Australia will be eligible for a voucher of up to \$50,000 to help install solar hot water systems and rainwater tanks," Mr Howard said.

"Not only will this help reduce energy and conserve water, but it will provide students and our school communities with a first-hand lesson in how we can act locally to preserve the environment," he said.

To get the message through to generation Y, the PM launched his message on the popular website YouTube this morning.

Joining funky independent musicians, jihadists and astronauts Mr Howard targetted the young audience and uploaded a video in which he speaks about the Government's commitment to the climate change challenge.

Included in the climate pledge Mr Howard also announced a 'cap and trade' emissions trading system.

17

With further details to be released later today, Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull offered few details of the scheme, but said it would not include a price on carbon. Without a price on carbon, large polluters will not be penalised by the scheme. But Mr Turnbull said the scheme would allow companies to invest in greenhouse gas abatement programs and said the Government recognised it was important to get the pricing mechanism right.

"We are learning a great deal from the efforts and failures of others and this will be the most comprehensive emissions trading scheme," Mr Turnbull told ABC radio.

Mr Howard said today Australian action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions since 1990 will prevent about 87 million tonnes of climate-changing carbon a year entering the atmosphere by 2010.

He said the \$627 million would bring total government spending to tackle global warming since 1996 to about \$3.4 billion.

"Stabilising atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases will be difficult, but not impossible," Mr Howard said.

"We do not have to sacrifice our economic prosperity to tackle the problem.

"Australia will more than play its part to address climate change, but will do it in a practical and balanced way in full knowledge of the economic consequences for our nation."

### **Herald Sun**

#### **Nuclear vision by Howard**

Prime Minister John Howard yesterday reiterated the Federal Government's commitment to nuclear power, saying that its introduction would contribute to the lowering of greenhouse emissions. Addressing the Melbourne Press Club on the proposed carbon trading scheme, Mr Howard said it would be economic and environmental folly for Australia to ignore the nuclear option.

"Nuclear power production has no direct CO2 emissions and is already a significant part of the world's energy system," Mr Howard said.

"Improved economic competitiveness and safety of nuclear power, along with concern for energy security and climate change, are leading to a steady increase in worldwide nuclear power capacity."

Alternative forms of power generation are set to become more economic in 2011 because operators of coal-fired stations will have to pay a price for exceeding greenhouse emission caps. The extent to which nuclear power will be competitive against coal hinges on the levels set for emissions caps and for longer-term emissions targets. An announcement on that will not be made until some time next year when a special research team within Treasury reports on the likely impact of greenhouse targets on the national economy and households.

"Australia's long-term emissions target will be both environmentally credible and economically achievable," Mr Howard said.

"We will build in flexibility to re-set the emissions trajectory if new scientific information or technologies become available, and as the international framework takes shape.

"This is the smart, sustainable way to set targets."

While acknowledging it was unlikely that nuclear power would be introduced within the next decade, Mr Howard said it was an option that should be kept on the table.

He attacked the ALP's anti-nuclear stance, highlighting that it was inconsistent with the recent removal of restrictions on uranium mining.

"You cannot run base load power stations on anything other than fossil fuels or nuclear power," Mr Howard said.

"I'm not saying it's something that's going to come in the next decade but what I'm saying is, we should allow for the market to include nuclear power as the market takes us in that direction."

The Government's carbon scheme will be administered from 2009 by an independent emissions regulator that would be established within the Treasury portfolio. The regulator will take responsibility for issuing and auctioning emissions permits. Mr Howard acknowledged the potential threat of climate change but cautioned that the policy response should not hurt the economy.

"All the good intentions in the world are worthless if we wreck our economy for no environmental gain," he said.

### **Adelaide Advertiser**

#### **RAINS FILLING DAMS:**

##### **Water-cut restraint**

Drenching rain in the last month looks certain to spare Melbourne residents from, tougher, stage-four water restrictions. Dams yesterday were 33.9 percent full. **Anybody would think the drought was over and done with.**

18

#### **Crude oil supplies not keeping up with global demand**

Conventional crude oil supplies will not keep up with growing global demand over the next 25 years and other fuels from ethanol to liquefied coal and oil from tar sands will be needed to close the gaps, according to a draft oil company report.

### **Feature Article**

#### **Devil in the detail**

There can be consequences if Government climate change efforts ignore practicalities for the "feel-good" factor. "It's no good helping the environment with one hand and poisoning it with the other."

**News.com.au**

#### **Flannery ignores climate change sceptics**

Being Australian of the Year has been no walk in the park for Professor Tim Flannery. Winning the accolade has given the country's best-known environmentalist a bigger platform to warn about the dangers of climate change.

But it's also made him a bigger target for sceptics who accuse him of being an alarmist about global warming.

Among them, New South Wales Treasurer Michael Costa went so far as to call Prof Flannery an "idiot" on the floor of State Parliament.

"If that's what passes for public debate in the NSW Parliament, then God help us all," the 51-year-old scientist and prolific author says with a chuckle.

In fact, Prof Flannery appears to hold climate change deniers in contempt, bluntly declaring the debate about the causes of global warming is over.

"In 2005 the deniers about climate change were winning. Today they've been vanquished, I believe, once and for all."

He refused to participate in last week's televised debate after the ABC's broadcast of *The Great Global Warming Swindle* documentary.

"That whole issue was just for entertainment.

"I didn't watch any of it. My only question was why did the ABC even put that to air?"

"It will be very interesting to see if the truth ever does come out as to why that program was put to air in Australia."

Prof Flannery makes no apologies for predicting the worst if greenhouse gas emissions are not heavily reduced quickly.

"We've underestimated the rate and speed of climate change and I'm as dismayed as anyone about that because I know how little time we have left to take action.

"There is enough, sufficient evidence in the fossil record to justify the idea that climate change can happen rapidly and will be utterly devastating to living things on our planet."

A controversial choice for the prestigious award often handed out to sports stars, Prof Flannery has raised some politicians' hackles.

Both Prime Minister John Howard and Labor leader Kevin Rudd attacked him over calling for a shutdown of the coal industry.

Prof Flannery says he endeavours not be outrageous or one-sided in his public comments.

"I'm very aware as Australian of the Year that I don't want to politicise this position and I try to be objective as I can and let the science drive my analysis."

Reports earlier in the year suggesting he considered giving up the title were a "media beat-up".

Prof Flannery said he had simply told an academic audience what the options were when trying to be non-political in a political environment.

One of those options was to give up the role, but he had "never" contemplated doing that.

"It should have been self-evident to people that the award, although it was handed to me by the Prime Minister, it's an award from the people of Australia.

"It's not something you can give back."

#### **Calls for PM to set climate target now**

The Federal Government is facing increasing pressure from the science and business communities to set a greenhouse target before this year's election.

Prominent climate activist Tim Flannery today warned the planet only had about 10 years to avoid dangerous climate change and voiced frustration at politicians' slow response.

Prime Minister John Howard yesterday gave some more details about the emissions trading scheme he plans to launch in 2011 but refuses to set an emissions reduction target at least until next year.

Professor Flannery, the 2007 Australian of the Year, said the Government had to set a target before this year's federal election.

"The current trading scheme that we've had talked about in recent days adds up to my mind to a great big 'trust me' till after the election," he told the National Press Club in Canberra.

"You, as a voter in that Australian election, have every right to hear the detail of how that carbon scheme will be implemented because it's such a critical element in our response to this very difficult problem."

Prof Flannery criticised the major political parties for failing to flesh out climate change policies.

"It seems to me that a lot of political announcements that are made at the moment are big on aspiration but pitifully short on detail.

"I become immensely frustrated when I see policies announced that won't be implemented for five years given that's half the time we have."

Prof Flannery also questioned the Government spending \$336 million on solar water heaters and rainwater tanks for schools, saying the funds would be more effectively directed to households.

An engineers group said the Government's failure to set even an interim target was a serious mistake which could endanger energy security.

"Industry already sees Australia's lack of direction on emissions reduction as an impediment to investment in energy infrastructure," Engineers Australia president Rolfe Hartley said.

"Energy infrastructure development cannot be delayed in this way without serious consequences for energy availability."

Labor leader Kevin Rudd said the target delay was endangering the economy.

"You have so many businesses out there waiting to invest in new, clean, green energies," Mr Rudd told reporters.

"But on the other hand they can't invest properly until we've got a carbon price determined by a carbon market which you can't have until you've established a carbon (target)."

A farm leader attacked the federal government and others for ignoring farmers during debate on carbon trading.

"This inequity cannot continue and I am putting both the federal and state governments on notice here today, that unless they address this situation, then there will be a price to be paid," Peter Kenny told a farm conference.

Mr Kenny, president of Queensland farm lobby group AgForce, said the vast woodlands and crops under the custodianship of farmers would help Australia meet its Kyoto targets.

### **PM 'climate inaction behind Ford job losses'**

Prime Minister John Howard's scepticism about climate change is directly responsible for the loss of 600 jobs at Ford's Geelong engine plant, the Australian Greens said today (**they have just proved something to me, they really are crazy**).

Greens Senator Christine Milne accused Mr Howard of failing to pick the global trend towards restricting carbon emissions and for lower emission engines.

Industry Minister Ian Macfarlane earlier today said Ford's engine plant in Geelong would close in 2010, with the loss of 600 jobs.

"Australian working families need look no further than Prime Minister Howard's climate scepticism and close relationship with the US administration to find the reason for job losses in the car manufacturing industry," Senator Milne said.

"John Howard says acting on climate change will cost jobs. Six hundred workers will realise that the government not acting is why they are unemployed.

"Cheques after the event are no substitute for anticipating trends. Farmers in the Murray-Darling Basin know this only too well.

"The 600 jobs lost in Geelong today are directly attributable to George Bush and John Howard's climate denial and complete failure to see the trend in the global economy is towards carbon constraint."

Senator Milne said the rest of the world recognised the need to sharply reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the planet's dependency on a dwindling oil supply.

"Europeans are buying small, fuel-efficient vehicles in increasing numbers and have set rigorous fuel efficiency standards," she said.

"Chinese and Asian manufacturers are moving rapidly into this mainstream end of the market, leaving Australian and US manufacturers in ignorant bliss."

She said the tragedy was that ordinary workers at the bottom of the corporate chain paid the highest price for the Government's inaction.

Concern that inaction will see farmers caught “like rabbits paralysed in the spotlight” has seen AgForce unveil a three-point carbon trading plan for producers right around Australia.

Claiming it to be a “national first,” the state’s peak primary industry lobby group says producers stand to pay the price, directly or indirectly, unless they can be included in the carbon debate - currently the hottest issue in the climate change controversy.

AgForce president Peter Kenny chose to unveil the initiative at the organization’s State Conference in Goondiwindi, by:

- Recognising agriculture in general, specifically Queensland, has already reduced emissions.
- Reinforcing the need for Federal Government to develop a fair trading market so producers can benefit from carbon ‘sinks’ on their properties.
- Responsibly organising Queensland farmers to ensure they emerge as key players in any developing emissions trading market.

Mr Kenny emphasised it was the Vegetation Management Act introduced by the Qld Government, along with Federal Government collaboration, which enabled Australia to meet its Kyoto targets.

He highlighted a graph showing how emissions from the transport and industrial sectors have increased by 150pc since 1990, while emissions from agriculture have been halved.

“Our nation’s farmers are already making a positive contribution to climate change, yet this is not being recognised,” Mr Kenny said.

SOURCE: Breaking news from *Queensland County Life* weekly newspaper, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

**VFF urged to boycott pipe steering committee**

Pressure is growing on the Victorian Farmers' Federation to take a tougher stance against the controversial north-south pipeline, to take water from the Goulburn Valley to Melbourne. The \$750m pipe linking the Goulburn system with Sugarloaf Reservoir in Melbourne's northeast is key to a recent Vic Govt funding deal.

Kerang-based VFF members this week, however, called for the VFF to boycott the Government-appointed Food Bowl steering committee set up to guide the project.

Irrigators at a VFF briefing on Tuesday argued the Government was using the presence of VFF water services committee chairman, Richard Anderson, and his deputy, Geoff Akers, on the steering committee as endorsement by farmers of the whole project.

The committee was set up to guide the \$2.2bn Goulburn Murray irrigation system upgrade

The meeting passed an unanimous motion calling for them to resign.

The Vic Government has pledged a \$600m investment to the \$1bn first stage of the upgrade in return for 75,000 megalitres a year of the water savings it delivers for Melbourne.

SOURCE: Extract from full story in *Stock & Land*, Vic, July 19

### **Goulburn, Vic, irrigation lifts water allocation**

Goulburn River, Vic, irrigators look set to receive close to 30pc irrigation allocation by the traditional start of the channel runs on August 15.

On Monday, Goulburn Murray Water increased its forecast August 15 allocation for the Goulburn 'under average conditions' to 28pc, up from 21pc a fortnight ago.

It lifted the 'dry conditions' forecast for the same date from zero to 9pc.

The authority said, however, there was not yet enough water in storages to immediately lift allocations on any system from the zero allocation across the board announced on July 2.

Two hundred thousand megalitres has flowed into Lake Eildon over the past fortnight, more than the entire 176,884ML volume held in the dam at its lowest point at the beginning of May.

SOURCE: Extract from full story in *Stock & Land*, July 19.

**News.com.au**

### **Desal plant construction to start this month**

Construction of Sydney's desalination plant will begin within a fortnight after the NSW government officially signed the contract.

Leighton Holdings and its joint venture partner, water services company Veolia Water, were awarded the \$1.76 billion contract to design, build, operate and maintain the plant at Kurnell in Sydney's south for 20 years. The two companies already work together on the Gold Coast desalination project.

Construction would begin in "July this year" and would be completed by late 2009 or early 2010, Premier Morris Iemma said today.

21

There had been no decision to delay or abandon the plant despite recent strong rainfall in Sydney catchment areas which have boosted dam levels to above 60 per cent capacity, he said.

"We are past the point of no return," Mr Iemma told reporters.

"This is about ensuring that Sydney is not brought to its knees."

Water Utilities Minister Nathan Rees reiterated that the plant would be 100 per cent powered by renewable energy.

"It will be a tremendous shot in the arm for the renewable sector," he said.

"Actually, more tremendous than they have seen."

A decision was yet to be made on what form of renewable energy, but it was most likely to be wind farms, Mr Rees said.

20<sup>th</sup>

**Adelaide Advertiser**

**CLIMATE CHANGE:**

**Set emission target 'soon'**

The Federal Government is facing increasing pressure from the scientific and business communities to set a greenhouse target before this year's election.

**news.com.au**

### **Australia invited into nuke club**

Australia is on the brink of joining the world's most influential and exclusive nuclear club, a move that would pave the way for uranium enrichment here. Australia and Canada - the world's largest



Australia is at the forefront of global action on climate change.

We know that by mid-century there has to be a massive reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation is the source of 20 per cent of those emissions.

This week in Sydney, Alexander Downer and I are hosting a first-of-its-kind High Level Meeting on Forests and Climate, bringing together about 200 government representatives from more than 60 countries.

Frances Seymour, director of the Centre for International Forestry Research, congratulated the Australian Government for being the first to make a significant commitment to the climate and forests agenda, and for convening this conference.

Deforestation has been largely neglected by international efforts to combat climate change, but as a result of a small number of countries, including Australia, forest issues are moving to the top of the agenda.

The reason is as obvious as the need is urgent.

The combined impact of the Kyoto Protocol has been to reduce the growth in CO2 emissions by 1 per cent. Yet many climate scientists tell us we need to reduce global emissions by 50 per cent by mid-century.

Future technologies will help us reach this goal. But right here and right now, we can make a massive difference if we can reverse the rate of deforestation.

The High Level Meeting is helping us build a common vision in this area ahead of the climate-focused APEC leaders meeting in September and the next round of UN climate negotiations to be held in Bali in December.

Australia is lending new energy and a \$200 million Global Initiative on Forests and Climate to reverse deforestation and by doing so, give the world the breathing space it needs until the technologies are able to deliver us abundant, zero or near zero emissions energy.

We will provide an initial \$10 million to Indonesia to help develop a national framework to prevent deforestation and improve systems for monitoring forests and the management of forest and peat land fires, and contribute \$11.7 million to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility which will help countries develop incentives for conserving forests and invest in sustainable forest management.

This action to reduce deforestation is just one part of a much bigger strategy developed by the Australian Government to help us reduce greenhouse emissions, both in Australia and around the world.

This week's meeting and the Global Initiative on Forests and Climate will help change the global landscape - both literally and figuratively.

*\* Malcolm Turnbull is Minister for the Environment.*

### **PM to push through water plan**

Prime Minister John Howard today said he would push ahead with his Murray-Darling Basin water plan, despite a breakdown of talks with Victoria. Mr Howard said a new Bill would soon be introduced to Federal Parliament to set up a new authority to deal with water matters in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Mr Howard announced the move after a breakdown of negotiations with Victoria over the Commonwealth's \$10 billion plan to take over the basin. Premier Steve Bracks said he refused to agree to the Commonwealth's draft legislation by the deadline of July 27, given to him today by Mr Howard.

Mr Howard said a new Bill would be introduced anyway.

"When Federal Parliament resumes in August the Government will immediately introduce a Bill based on its existing Constitutional power to establish a new authority to deal with water matters in the Murray-Darling Basin," he said in Perth today.

"This has been rendered necessary by the announcement of the Victorian Government today it would not agree to the draft water Bill that has been submitted to Victoria and the other jurisdictions in the Murray-Darling Basin."

Mr Howard said he regretted having to make the decision.

"I'm intensely disappointed election year politics have intervened," Mr Howard said.

"It's a great disappointment."

Interstate trading and commerce powers would be used to enforce the legislation on the states, Mr Howard said .

"What it will mean is that you will have far greater Commonwealth involvement than what he (Mr Bracks) was willing to agree to but not the same level of Commonwealth power that would have been achieved by a referral of power," Mr Howard said.

"There's some interstate trade and commerce powers and there's some foreign affairs powers.

"I would have preferred the alternative course but I'm left with no alternative."

Mr Howard admitted the new Bill would be inferior.

"It could have been close to ideal if Victoria had come on board," he said.

**Adelaidenow.com**

### **Global change expert appointed**

THE University of Adelaide has appointed leading global change scientist Professor Nick Harvey as its new Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences from 30 July.

Prof Harvey is currently Professor in Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Adelaide. He has also held senior positions in the University including Director of the Graduate School of Environmental Studies, Associate Dean (Research), and Acting Executive Dean on two previous occasions.

Acting Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Adelaide, Professor Fred McDougall, said: "I am delighted to announce this appointment. Professor Harvey brings to his new role an outstanding academic and research record, and considerable leadership experience in research and education. He has already made a significant contribution to the global profile of the University and its research."

Professor Harvey is on a number of international scientific committees dealing with global change and was one of the lead authors on the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Working Group II report, the global body assessing the scientific evidence for climate change. He is also currently Chair of the international START-Oceania committee, based in Fiji, dealing with global change research and training.

Professor Harvey has written more than 100 publications including books, book chapters and scientific papers on coastal management and environmental impact assessment.

He is a member of the Australian Government Advisory Group on Coastal Vulnerability Assessment and a member of the Executive Steering Committee for South Australia's State of the Environment Report.

**Adelaide Advertiser**

### **Funds for forests**

Australia will give \$10 million to Indonesia and \$1107 million to a World Bank program as part of the Federal Government's \$200 million global climate change initiative.

25<sup>th</sup>

**News.com.au**

### **Murray rescue battle**

The Federal Government will use constitutional powers to push through its stalled rescue plan for the Murray-Darling Basin, after Victoria again refused to sign.

A clearly frustrated Prime Minister John Howard announced the radical move in Perth after protracted negotiations with Victorian Premier Steve Bracks broke down.

"We will not be deterred from going ahead with a national plan - it will be a less adequate national plan courtesy of Victoria," he said.

It is believed the Commonwealth will seek to rely on powers in the Constitution relating to corporations, interstate trade, and the external affairs powers which were used in the 1983 move by the Hawke government to stop the Franklin Dam in Tasmania.

But exactly how the powers operate will not be clear until the legislation is introduced in early August.

The decision shows Mr Howard has reached the end of his patience with Victoria after seven months of negotiations, and with a federal election rapidly approaching.

It also opens the prospect of two authorities managing the basin rather than one.

Mr Bracks said he had been given an ultimatum to sign on to the deal by July 27 but would not do so.

He was not satisfied the rights of Victoria's irrigators and the environment had been adequately protected in the proposed Bill. "The Prime Minister's letter today has delivered a three-legged horse and that is regrettable," he said.

Mr Howard announced the \$10 billion, 10-year plan in January this year. While the proposal received immediate support from a variety of quarters, state governments complained it was ill-conceived and not properly costed. A series of intense negotiations with state premiers ensued, with all states except Victoria eventually agreeing to an amended version.

Mr Howard announced the dramatic decision to push ahead with the plan despite Victoria's opposition.

"When Federal Parliament resumes in August, the Government will immediately introduce a Bill based on

existing constitutional power to establish a new authority to deal with water matters in the Murray-Darling Basin," he said.

Under the plan, the Commonwealth assumes control of key aspects of the massive river system in exchange for Commonwealth investment.

35

Mr Howard said the drastic action of exercising federal powers to effectively take control of the system from the states was justified given the delays in getting the rescue package up and running.

"This has been rendered necessary by the announcement of the Victorian Government today it would not agree to the draft water Bill that has been submitted to Victoria and other jurisdictions in the Murray Darling Basin," he said.

While South Australia had already agreed to refer its powers to the Commonwealth, Premier Mike Rann said he accepted Mr Howard's assurances the agreements reached with the state would be honoured.

"I have just received an assurance from Malcolm Turnbull that the independent commission that I and Karlene Maywald negotiated will be part of that legislation," he said.

"Key to it is an independent commission to run the River Murray."

Mr Howard said it was a pity politics appeared to have entered into the negotiations with Victoria.

"I'm intensely disappointed election-year politics have intervened," he said.

Mr Rann said he was not sure what had gone wrong in the negotiations with Victoria.

"I am not interested in the election games, I am not interested in the party political politics, all I want to see is the best outcome for the River Murray that has always been my desire," he said.

Labor water spokesman Anthony Albanese said that "from day one" federal Labor had "provided in-principle bipartisan support for a national water plan".

Labelling the breakdown in talks "unfortunate", Mr Albanese said it would have been better for the Federal Government to have worked "constructively" with the Bracks Government.

Meanwhile, the State Government announced yesterday better flows into the Murray system meant irrigators would be allowed to use more water, but householders have been given no relief from tough restrictions.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said householders would be unable to water their gardens until at least August.

Irrigators will be able to use 13 per cent of their allocation, up from 4 per cent, from August 2.

### **Murray takeover to end in court**

The Howard Government will push ahead with its takeover of the Murray-Darling river system without the support of key state Victoria in a move likely to end in the High Court.

After months of wrangling with Victoria over the details of the \$10.5 billion plan, the federal Government yesterday declared it would end the negotiations and forge on with an alternative plan using its external affairs powers -- last used 25 years ago by the Hawke government to stop the Franklin River dam in Tasmania.

Having lost patience with Victoria, Prime Minister John Howard said the Coalition would introduce a new bill to achieve the takeover -- which has the in-principle support of the other basin states, Queensland, NSW and South Australia -- when federal parliament resumes in August.

The Prime Minister conceded the revised approach, which would include a basin-wide cap on water allocations, was "less than satisfactory but it's better than the existing arrangement".

"It could have been close to ideal if Victoria had come onboard," he said.

Premier Steve Bracks last night insisted Victoria would not sign away the rights of its irrigators, challenged the commonwealth to hold a referendum on the issue, and threatened a constitutional challenge.

"Victoria believes it has strong legal grounds to oppose any constitutional takeover of the state's water rights and will defend this right," he said.

But federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the Howard Government was very confident the new plan was constitutional.

"This legislation will be upheld in the High Court," Mr Turnbull said.

He said Mr Bracks had demanded one deal for Victoria and a separate deal for the other three states.

"The position was made very clear ... that a special deal for Victoria was not acceptable either to the commonwealth or the other states."

Under the revised plan, the commonwealth would seize control over the overall amount of water diverted to irrigation in the basin through the creation of a new Murray-Darling Basin Authority. However, the new authority would not be able to set seasonal river levels or the water allocations of individual irrigation authorities or rivers.

The collapse of the negotiations means the commonwealth will withhold about \$1 billion from Victoria but it is expected to make funds available to the state's farmers willing to sell water allocations or perform on-farm efficiency work.

Mr Howard, who had previously described a deal without Victoria as a "three-legged horse", accused the Bracks Government of playing politics to help Kevin Rudd.

36

"I'm intensely disappointed election-year politics have intervened," Mr Howard said. "It's a great disappointment."

Mr Bracks last night rejected the accusations: "I am not interested in politics, I don't have an election to worry about.

"(Mr Howard) is going to create considerable uncertainty right across the Murray-Darling Basin. It will be a hotch-potch, which will prove, in the words of some other legislators around the country, a dog's breakfast."

The likely High Court challenge to the plan is expected to be made under section 100 of the constitution, which states: "The commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a state or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation."

Victoria was pushing for a side deal that would result in it ceding control over the overall irrigation allocation but keeping water allocations in individual rivers in the hands of water authorities, rather than the commonwealth.

The Bracks Government is adamant Victorian irrigators want state-based irrigation authorities to retain control of allocations because they have a strong track record of delivering on their high-security entitlements, in stark contrast to NSW, where irrigators have threatened to sue the state Government over downgraded allocations.

The plan was originally forecast to save 3000GL of water -- about six times the volume of Sydney Harbour -- but Victoria believes it will fail to achieve anywhere near its forecast targets without its involvement.

The Bracks Government believes the commonwealth will spend billions buying up unreliable water entitlements in NSW that don't yield anything in dry years.

Mr Turnbull said the forecast savings would have to be downgraded but said considerable extra water would be generated for irrigators and the environment.

### Water put on ice

The Howard Government has finally run out of time on the national water plan.

In January, the Prime Minister announced his grand \$10 billion national plan to unite state and federal governments and reform the mismanagement of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Despite six months of negotiations, there is no deal with Victoria and legislation of some description needs to be put on the table now if it is to be in place before the election.

So the grand plan has been downgraded. The billions of dollars for buying back water and investment in infrastructure will still be put on the table but there will be no overarching national management of the system -- just a new collegiate body setting a cap on water consumption, a modest improvement on the way the Murray-Darling Basin Commission operates now. Victoria is likely to be punished by not being given access to the \$5.8 billion infrastructure investment fund. Its irrigators will still be able to sell their entitlements on the water market. Experts are increasingly sceptical that this approach will be tough enough. They think compulsory buyback is inevitable if governments are serious about fixing over-allocation. The Nationals vehemently disagree. Unsurprisingly, a process borne out of political opportunism is undone by the same. The principle of the Howard Government's visionary plan has attracted genuine praise from most sectors. But the complex and delicate process of consultation and drafting legislation has had to be done on the run, and in an election year to boot.

What might normally have taken two years to sort out has been tried in reverse in six months.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks can argue that his irrigators have more to lose than the other states and needed to be convinced the revised regime could guarantee they would not be worse off. It's going to be tough for many Victorian irrigators in the coming years, in particular those in the dairy industry. The real deal isn't over, but it has now been iced until next year. John Howard and Malcolm Turnbull will put a brave face on the outcome but it is not what they hoped for. They now have to hope they will be in a position to resume negotiations properly in 2008.

### **The Daily Telegraph**

#### **Greens attack Rudd, Howard similarities**

The Australian Greens said they are exploiting similarities between Kevin Rudd and John Howard in an online advertisement. The ad shows the Labor leader and prime minister in bed together with Mr Rudd's face hidden under a book version of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Attacking the major parties' climate change policies, the ad finishes with the message: "Howard and Rudd, in bed with the coal industry".

It is similar to a Labor ad which portrays Mr Howard with his head under the covers of a bed ignoring climate change.

A Greens spokeswoman said the party would try to raise money in a bid to run its ad on television.

37

"Release of the ad follows further steps this week by Kevin Rudd to join John Howard in rejecting sensible policies on the environment and climate change when he overturned Labor's Tasmanian forest policy," Greens NSW campaign coordinator Lesa de Leau said.

#### **More action on climate change**

Even with an election just around the corner, it is abundantly clear the Federal Government still doesn't get climate change.

Malcolm Turnbull's fraudulent claim on these pages yesterday that Australia is a world leader on climate change is laughable. We are world-leading only in skyrocketing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr Turnbull can't paper over the massive cracks in the Government's climate change credentials.

Kevin Rudd's commitment this week to ban the sale of illegally imported timber products isolates the Government on yet another aspect of the issue.

The truth is we can only stop the clearing of rainforests if we end illegal logging and contribute to the now famous Kyoto Protocol process.

Experts agree that one of the best things we can do is to stop the importation of illegal timber. This is exactly what Kevin Rudd and Labor have committed to doing if elected.

Illegal logging is a massive industry and a disaster for the environment in our region. This logging damages precious habitats in places such as Indonesia and Malaysia and generates greenhouse pollution that will affect us for generations to come.

It also provides unfair competition to the Australian timber industry and undermines efforts to help the industry adapt to the realities of climate change.

Stopping illegally logged timber products helps the countries where the products come from and help reduce our \$2 billion trade deficit on timber products.

We can't fix climate change by ignoring the rest of the world or pretending the livelihoods of timber industry workers don't matter. We need comprehensive, balanced policies.

Being willing to face up to the big picture also means we have a responsibility to look out for our neighbours when it comes to climate change. Rising sea levels are already threatening many of the tiny Pacific nations on our doorstep.

That's why Labor is directing \$150 million in development aid to assist neighbours in coping with climate change problems they did not create.

We've listened to the aid experts and to major scientific and economic reports such as the UK Stern Review. As a well-off nation, it is crystal clear in our minds that we have a moral duty here.

We will provide moral leadership on this aspect of climate change and encourage other countries to follow in our path. This means we will share technology, help monitor the effects of climate change and improve the way forests are managed.

The Government might be in denial about the realities of climate change but Labor understands that environmental issues are a part of all our lives now. It's time we had Government policies to match.

#### **PM pledges to control water**

John Howard has embarked on a last-ditch effort to save his \$10 billion national water plan by using extraordinary Commonwealth powers to override Victoria's opposition. Fed-up with the state's stonewalling, Mr Howard pledged to seize control of management of the Murray-Darling Basin by introducing legislation into Parliament next month. Victoria was the only state refusing to hand over its powers to the waterway. Mr Howard accused Victoria of wanting to leverage a special deal in the run-up to the federal poll. "I'm intensely disappointed election year politics have intervened," he said. Mr Howard indicated the Government will rely on a range of Commonwealth powers including the corporations, interstate trade and the external affairs powers. He said the crucial issue of water crossed state boundaries and strong action was needed. The move paves the way for the Commonwealth to take control of management of the river basin and commit \$3 billion towards a buyout of water allocations. Queensland, NSW and South Australia agreed to the takeover in February. Premier Peter Beattie last night said the Queensland Government remained committed to the agreement. Mr Howard's move came after talks broke down with Victorian Premier Steve Bracks. Mr Bracks said the Prime Minister had yesterday given him an ultimatum demanding he agree to the Commonwealth's draft legislation by July 27, but Victoria would not do so. Professor Don Rothwell of International Law at the Australian National University said Mr Howard risked a sharp response from the states but had the power to seize control.

38

Meanwhile, Queensland Liberal leader Bruce Flegg has been caught out in an embarrassing gaffe with claims the Queensland Government was secretly asking the private sector for emergency water supply ideas.

Dr Flegg yesterday produced a document he said proved the Government was desperately conducting a clandestine tender process for water projects.

However, Mr Beattie said the tender was announced on June 24 and appeared on the Department of Infrastructure website.

#### **Adelaidenow.com**

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"We will not be deterred from going ahead with a national plan - it will be a less adequate national plan courtesy of Victoria," he said.

It is believed the Commonwealth will seek to rely on powers in the Constitution relating to corporations, interstate trade, and the external affairs powers which were used in the 1983 move by the Hawke government to stop the Franklin Dam in Tasmania.

But exactly how the powers operate will not be clear until the legislation is introduced in early August.

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39

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said householders would be unable to water their gardens until at least August. Irrigators will be able to use 13 per cent of their allocation, up from 4 per cent, from August 2.

### **FarmOnLine**

#### **Howard takes over Murray-Darling**

As above

#### **Murray-Darling takeover may not be legal: MP**

We need to be sure that a transfer of control over the Murray-Darling water is constitutional, Independent MP Tony Windsor said today.

The Commonwealth may well need a referendum before it takes control of the Murray-Darling.

He says the details of the federal government's plan to take over the Murray-Darling Basin must be made public and the basin's communities and irrigators must be consulted.

Mr Windsor issued a joint statement with another key Independent, Peter Andren.

"All the negotiation around the Howard government's \$10bn water plan has involved federal and state leaders, ministers and bureaucrats with no sign that the communities and irrigators who rely on the Murray-Darling will get a say," Mr Windsor said.

"My independent colleague, Peter Andren and I are calling on the federal and state governments to make the draft legislation and explanatory documentation available to the public with a view to launching an extensive community consultation process.

"If the Commonwealth government is going to take over control of the Murray-Darling, with the agreement of the States, once Victoria gets on board, there are questions that need to be answered.

"Section 100 of the constitution states: The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.

"So 'the residents' of a State have the same rights as their state governments when it comes to the regulation of water," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Andren believes that there is also questions of:

- How much authority is actually to be handed over by the states.
- How duplication of roles may occur and therefore duplication of costs to the taxpayer.

Mr Andren asks, "What are the Commonwealth's plans for the allocation of water to the towns, irrigators, and to environmental flows?"

"How can anyone accept the federal government's proposal without this information?"

He concluded, "This takeover requires extensive consultation for all the so-called stake holders in the Murray-Darling basin before anything is decided and the federal government must make the details of its plan publicly available."

"The people of the basin must be confident that the Commonwealth is not just creating another layer of bureaucracy and that there will be sufficient checks and balances in place against the misuse of our precious water resources," Mr Andren said.

SOURCE: Breaking national news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

**Am I just being cynical or is there an election approaching, Victoria along with NSW the two most inefficient States when it comes to irrigation. Bracks refusal to sign, I believe is in no one's best interests, when are political leaders going to look at the Murray-Darling Basin in the BEST INTERESTS of AUSTRALIA.**

### **Young Aussie farmer forum focuses on water**

Young farmers from across Australia are meeting in the NSW Riverina today for a national young farmers forum. The efficient use of water in agriculture is a key focus of discussion among the 100 young farmers who are gathering at the Griffith forum.

Rows of butcher's paper stuck to the walls in the Griffith Ex Serviceman's club set the scene for this high-powered national conference this week.

Delegates from each state and territory outlined their ideas in colourful pen and pinned them up for the scrutiny of their peers. Aged from 18 to 35 they listened to presentations on climate change, water reform, and commodity forecasts. The beef and wool industries were represented and there was a strong focus on horticulture with many local Griffith delegates participating.

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, says the two-day forum provides "a great opportunity for innovative young farmers to step forward and contribute their knowledge and experience to the future of Australia's agricultural industries."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

40

### **Adelaide Advertiser**

### **SOLD DOWN THE RIVER: Politics sinks the Murray rescue plan**

**Should it not read: Victoria & Premier Bracks sinks the Murray rescue plan**

### **The River News**

### **More inflows, but not enough yet**

The South Australian Government's Water Resources report for July has indicated inflows into the Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs have increased as a result of higher inflows from the unregulated tributaries that feed into these storages, but storages still remain critically low.

26<sup>th</sup>

### **FarmOnline**

### **Bracks issues High Court challenge on water**



Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, vowed on Wednesday to take the Commonwealth Government to the High Court if necessary to fight a proposed takeover of the Murray Darling Basin announced on Tuesday.

Mr Bracks said the Victorian Government continued to oppose the takeover.

"I don't believe the Commonwealth has a strong constitutional position," he said.

"This is simply a power grab from Canberra.

"I believe we will be successful in the courts."

Mr Bracks was advised by the Prime Minister, John Howard, on Tuesday that if the Victorian Government did not sign up to the National Water Plan by Friday, it would be deemed to have rejected it.

He warned that, if the issue went to court, it could drag on for years.

SOURCE: Breaking news from *Stock & Land*, Vic. Full analysis in July 26 issue.

#### **Now Vic will lose \$3bn for irrigation upgrade: Turnbull**

Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, is depriving Victorian irrigators of the opportunity to use \$3 billion for Federal money for major infrastructure reform, according to Federal Minister for Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull.

The billions of dollars earmarked under Prime Minister John Howard's \$10 billion water plan for improving off-farm irrigation systems, like weirs and channels, will be split between Queensland, NSW and South Australia because Victoria does not want to be part of the deal.

Mr Turnbull said the Victorian Government had made it clear to date, that it did not want to sign the intergovernmental agreement.

By doing so, it foregoes any chance of accessing the \$3 billion earmarked for off-farm infrastructure investments by the Federal Government.

"The other states have already agreed to the plan, and I imagine will continue to agree with it," Mr Turnbull said.

SOURCE: Breaking national news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

#### **Qld irrigators on edge over water deal**

Queensland irrigators are on edge, believing it will be "a very tense week" as the implications of Victoria's failing to agree to Prime Minister John Howard's \$10 billion national water plan for the Murray Darling Basin strike home.

The Victorian Government's refusal to continue negotiations with the Commonwealth might change the whole political dynamic surrounding the nation's historic water deal.

Now the Prime Minister has stepped in to say the Commonwealth will move to control the Murray-Darling system, with or without Victoria joining the national agreement

"We had some sympathy, as did the other states, with some of the points that Victoria was making," chief executive Queensland Farmers Federation, John Cherry said today.

"But this new development opens up a range of significant legal questions

"Does that mean the draft we have in front of us, based on a referral of powers, is no longer the draft we will be dealing with?

"Are there now going to be separate pieces of legislation to cover the other three states?"

SOURCE: Breaking news from *Queensland County Life* weekly newspaper. Full report in July 26 issue.

#### **We're disappointed 'politics got in the way': VFF**

Victorian Farmers Federation president, Simon Ramsay, is disappointed "politics got in the way", believing an outcome on the national \$10bn water plan was just a whisper away. But National Farmers Federation water spokesman, Laurie Arthur, said there had been little progress for some time.

"A lot of the comments that Victoria has been saying about the plan (and concerns about the legislation) just don't stack up," he said.

"This started as a political process and it's been politically charged the whole way," Mr Arthur said.

"The NFF has been given assurances on many occasions about many of the things Victoria keeps asking for."

Mr Arthur said that, when speaking with Mr Turnbull on Tuesday night, it was made clear the infrastructure package in the plan would not be made available to Victoria.

But on-farm irrigation incentives would be.

The Commonwealth will now establish:

- A new Murray-Darling Basin Authority to set basin wide caps.
- Oversee water plans in each catchment.

But the Commonwealth won't control the system outright, as originally intended.

SOURCE: Breaking national news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **Rudd snubs water pipeline option**

Federal Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd's water infrastructure credentials again are in the limelight. Despite Queensland's dipping dam levels, a Rudd Labor Government will not countenance piping water from the Clarence River, northern NSW, across the border to the parched southeast corner of Queensland. That was an outcome of last week's whistle-stop tour of the marginal NSW electorate of Page, in northern NSW.

The dam on the Clarence River to supply southeast Qld is a scenario raised by the Federal Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, earlier this year.

The water problems in southeast Queensland have been blamed on State Labor governments' water mismanagement over the past 17 years.

Late last month, the Nationals' Member for Lockyer, Ian Rickuss, in the Qld Parliament, said those years saw the cancellation of the Wolffdene Dam, once earmarked to drought-proof the state's southeast corner. Mr Rickuss said the dam was ready to go ahead when the Goss Labor Government came to power in 1989.

But it was later spiked following anti-dam protests.

"The men who did that were Kevin Rudd, Peter Beattie, Wayne Goss and Henry Palaszczuk," Mr Rickuss said in Parliament.

Mr Rudd then was a senior public servant advising the Qld Cabinet.

The proposed Wolffdene Dam was to have been built southwest of Brisbane, not far from the earlier Hinze dam, now successfully supplying the Gold Coast, despite the drought.

SOURCE: Extract from full story in *Queensland Country Life*, July 26

### **Labor reserves comments on water plan turn**

Labor's Federal water spokesman, Anthony Albanese, is waiting to examine the details of any Bill put forward by Prime Minister John Howard on the Murray Darling Basin.

While the Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, is already applying pressure to his Federal Labor counterparts to reconsider the plan if it wins government, Mr Albanese has not put forward much comment on the latest turn in the breakdown in negotiations between the Commonwealth and Victoria.

"From day one, Federal Labor has provided "in principle" bipartisan support for a national water plan," Mr Albanese said.

"It is unfortunate the negotiations have broken down between the Commonwealth and the Victorian Governments.

"It would have been better for the Commonwealth Government to have worked constructively with the Victorian Government to reach an agreement."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

### **SA irrigation allocations lifted to 13pc**

Irrigation allocations in South Australia will be raised from four to 13pc from August 2, but SA River Murray Minister, Karlene Maywald, warns that increases will now plateau over the next few months. Rainfall across the Murray-Darling Basin in June and early July has improved Murray inflows. That's marginally lifted storage levels in Hume and Dartmouth Reservoirs and Lake Victoria. The improved storages mean carryover water can now be allocated in full from August 2.

Mrs Maywald warned that allocation increases in SA, however, would plateau until the water available, increased to about double what has been available to date.

"The drought has meant that water sharing between SA, New South Wales and Victoria has had to be re-negotiated," she said.

"State Premiers have agreed to temporary arrangements where each state receives an equal share of inflows early in the season, as well as allowing some water for the river's recovery, to keep it flowing.

"SA successfully negotiated access to its share of water earlier in the season enabling a modest allocation to be given to irrigators to begin their water year.

"But this means future increase in allocation will be limited until total inflows lift."

SOURCE: Extract from full report in the *Stock Journal*, SA, July 26.

### **Rice planting 'on a knife edge'**

Farmers planning to grow rice in the upcoming season are thin on the ground due to zero water allocations.

In the midst of dry seasonal conditions and continuing debates about water reforms the upcoming rice planting was tipped to be small.

Speaking at the National Young Farmers Forum in Griffith, NSW, this week, National Farmers Federation (NFF) water taskforce chairman, Laurie Arthur, said the upcoming rice planting was on a knife-edge at the moment.

Rain is desperately needed to turn around the dire catchment situation.

The Medium Grain Rice website tips that Australia's 2007-2008 rice crop – to be harvested in April and May next year - may amount to just 10,000 hectares.

John Lacey, at the Yanco Agricultural Institute, part of the NSW Department of Primary Industries, said the water situation would lead to low plantings.

SOURCE: Extract from report in *The Land*, NSW, July 26.

**News.com.au**

### **Action not words needed on climate**

Even with an election just around the corner, it is abundantly clear the Federal Government still doesn't get climate change.

Malcolm Turnbull's fraudulent claim on these pages yesterday that Australia is a world leader on climate change is laughable. We are world-leading only in skyrocketing greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr Turnbull can't paper over the massive cracks in the Government's climate change credentials.

Kevin Rudd's commitment this week to ban the sale of illegally imported timber products isolates the Government on yet another aspect of the issue.

The truth is we can only stop the clearing of rainforests if we end illegal logging and contribute to the now famous Kyoto Protocol process.

Experts agree that one of the best things we can do is to stop the importation of illegal timber. This is exactly what Kevin Rudd and Labor have committed to doing if elected.

Illegal logging is a massive industry and a disaster for the environment in our region. This logging damages precious habitats in places such as Indonesia and Malaysia and generates greenhouse pollution that will affect us for generations to come.

It also provides unfair competition to the Australian timber industry and undermines efforts to help the industry adapt to the realities of climate change.

Stopping illegally logged timber products helps the countries where the products come from and helps reduce our \$2 billion trade deficit on timber products.

We can't fix climate change by ignoring the rest of the world or pretending the livelihoods of timber industry workers don't matter. We need comprehensive, balanced policies.

Being willing to face up to the big picture also means we have a responsibility to look out for our neighbours when it comes to climate change. Rising sea levels are already threatening many of the tiny Pacific nations on our doorstep.

That's why Labor is directing \$150 million in development aid to assist neighbours in coping with climate change problems they did not create.

We've listened to the aid experts and to major scientific and economic reports such as the UK Stern Review. As a well-off nation, it is crystal clear in our minds that we have a moral duty here.

We will provide moral leadership on this aspect of climate change and encourage other countries to follow in our path. This means we will share technology, help monitor the effects of climate change and improve the way forests are managed.

The Government might be in denial about the realities of climate change but Labor understands that environmental issues are a part of all our lives now. It's time we had Government policies to match.

**The Australian**

### **Howard to win battle, lose war**

John Howard would win a High Court battle against Victoria for control of the Murray-Darling, but end up with a dog's breakfast of partial powers, according to constitutional experts.

The experts -- including Sydney University's George Winterton, University of NSW's George Williams and Curtin University deputy Vice Chancellor Greg Craven -- said precedents such as the Hawke government's

43

successful seizure of control of Tasmania's Franklin River, and the states' failed High Court challenge to Work Choices, showed the High Court would favour the commonwealth.

But the result would be less clean-cut in a fight over the Murray-Darling, which involved a broad range of economic, scientific and legal issues.

The Howard Government would have to draw on a "cocktail" of powers that would be offset by some residual state rights over water allocation. These powers would include the external affairs powers to make use of international environmental treaties; interstate commerce powers, which would cover trade; and corporations powers, which could cover water utilities. Victoria could wrest back some residual control under section 100 of the constitution, which enshrines "reasonable" use of water by the states for irrigation and conservation. "The potential is ... a pretty chaotic outcome," Professor Craven said.

### **Herald Sun**

#### **Gate shuts on water**

The Howard Government says it has no plans to privatise Australia's major river system as part of its \$10 billion takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Prime Minister John Howard, Treasurer Peter Costello and Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull lined up to reject claims by Premier Steve Bracks that the Federal Government would privatise the river system.

Mr Bracks said: "They'll seek to privatise it, to get private capital in, to do what happens in parts of NSW, where you see private investment, private ownership of irrigators."

The two governments traded insults after six months of negotiations seeking to get Victoria to join South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland in the Federal Government plan collapsed.

The issue now seems destined for the High Court. Commentators agree the Federal Government has the power to take the system over under the Constitution. Mr Howard said claims that Canberra would privatise the river system were "desperate, stupid, inaccurate and just totally wrong".

"We are not asking the states to put in any money. We are relieving the states of big financial obligations, and it's about time that the Victorian Government thought of the national interest," Mr Howard said.

Mr Bracks said yesterday he could not sign the plan because it would badly affect Victorian irrigators.

He insisted he had a strong legal case to defend Victoria's rights to manage its river systems, and vowed the case would go to the High Court.

"I'm very confident the plan won't go through. I don't think the Commonwealth has a strong constitutional position," he said.

Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu urged Mr Bracks to sign the plan or risk billions of dollars in federal funding.

Mr Turnbull says he will not provide the funding if Victoria refuses to join the other states.

"It has become clear Steve Bracks never had any intention of signing the plan, and his stalling technique over the past six months was merely a tactic to secure the north-south pipeline and a desperate attempt to solve his water issues in Melbourne," Mr Turnbull said.

Victorian Nationals leader Peter Ryan agreed, saying Mr Bracks's stance had been determined by his decision to supply water for Melbourne by pumping it over the Great Dividing Range from the Goulburn River.

"Under the agreement we've struck with the Federal Government, the Government is prepared to commit large amounts of money to the Goulburn Valley infrastructure improvements -- but only on the basis that the savings stay in the Goulburn Valley, and Melbourne gets nothing," Mr Ryan said.

"That doesn't suit Mr Bracks. He therefore wants to fund his own plan for infrastructure development, and enable the Goulburn Valley to contribute the 75 billion litres of water a year over the Great Divide to Melbourne," he said.

Mr Costello said he believed Victoria would inevitably sign up.

"I'll make this prediction: in five or 10 or 15 years' time, do you think there will be a different system in Victoria to the rest of the country?"

"I don't think so.

"I think we'll have national legislation, and I think whatever they are saying now, that will be the outcome," he said.

"The High Court will uphold the Commonwealth power, it's just a question of how far. It may not have the power to go 100 per cent into a national system," he

**adelaidenow.com**

### **Scrutiny for water guzzlers**

The state's biggest domestic water users will be audited to help identify water-saving and efficiency measures.

44

The announcement follows a weekend report in The Advertiser which revealed almost 200 homes were using an average of 5479 litres a day - or eight times the average consumption.

The worst offender was a Kensington Gardens family using 17,000 litres a day.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said she was astounded by the eastern suburbs household's use but argued they were "not water thieves" - calculating their annual bill at \$7290.

Restrictions only apply to outdoor watering, and the no-watering policy was this week extended until August.

"There's no evidence they (the Kensington Gardens household) are in breach of the water restrictions," she said. "I'm encouraging SA Water to work with these people to ensure they can minimise their water usage. I'm not going to go in and say we're going to limit the amount of water any householder or any operator can take," as long as they stayed within the restrictions.

Swimming pools, multimillion-dollar mansions and leaks were blamed for the 171 households found to have used two-million litres in 2006-07.

"I was astounded, absolutely astounded," Ms Maywald said.

"It's an enormous amount of water to be using it could possibly be because they've got some serious leaks on their property."

Ms Maywald said the audit, only for excessive residential users, would be similar to one now used for industrial customers.

"SA Water officers will be available to assist customers to audit their water use - or if the customer prefers - they will be referred to the EcoSmart trained plumbers or supported to complete a self-audit."

A review is also being conducted into SA's two-tier pricing system for households amid claims water prices were too cheap.

**News.com.au**

### **Water privatisation claims 'stupid'**

A claim by Victorian Premier Steve Bracks that the federal takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin was about privatising the system was stupid and wrong, Prime Minister John Howard said today.

Mr Howard announced yesterday that the Commonwealth would use constitutional powers to take control of the basin without the support of Victoria as part of its \$10 billion water security package.

Victoria has refused to transfer its powers, with Mr Bracks saying today it was the beginning of a plan to privatise the water supply.

But Mr Howard said today that Mr Bracks was wrong.

"That is desperate, stupid, inaccurate and just totally wrong. It's got nothing to do with privatisation," he said on ABC radio in Perth.

He accused Mr Bracks of going back on promises made last February to get his state on side.

"I have been negotiating with Mr Bracks for five months," Mr Howard said.

"On the 23rd of February, when NSW, Queensland, South Australia and the ACT signed up, Mr Bracks and I had a separate meeting in my office.

"And I said, 'What are you going to do Steve?' He said, 'Give me a few weeks, I've got to talk people in my own state around and then I think I'll be able to sign up'.

"That was the impression I was left with by Mr Bracks and I have been in good faith for five months trying to persuade him to come on board.

Mr Howard said the Federal Government was putting \$10 billion in and had not asked for any money from the states.

"We're relieving the states of a big financial obligation, and it's about time the Victorian Government thought of the national interest," he said.

Mr Bracks warned the issue would now drag on for "years and years," with Victoria prepared to challenge the Federal Government's plan in the High Court.

NSW Premier Morris Iemma said the breakdown in negotiations was a reflection on Federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

"I encourage him to keep trying with the Victorians."

Mr Turnbull has attacked the Victorian Government for its "pathetic approach" to the national takeover, saying he believed Victoria was playing politics "in large measure."

"I think they don't want the Federal Government to have a win - quote, unquote - in an election year.

"That's a really pathetic approach to an issue like this.

"Three states and one territory have supported it (the national scheme for the Murray-Darling Basin). One state has consistently opposed it and now seeks to wreck it. Steve Bracks stood up yesterday and said the national plan was dead. Well, it's not dead, it's very much alive and it's going to happen."

45

Federal Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd urged both parties to return to the negotiating table.

Mr Rudd said Labor supported a national solution to the water crisis and it was too important an issue for party politics to intervene. "No one wants to waste money going to court. We want a national outcome on water, but we've also got to give Victoria's farmers a fair shake as well."

SA Premier Mike Rann said he expected the rescue plan to remain.

"The bottom line for us is we have cracked the deal and we are sticking to it and we expect the Commonwealth to stick to the deal that they made," Mr Rann said.

SA initially refused to support the plan, insisting on conditions including an independent management commission and assured environmental water flows.

Mr Rann said Mr Turnbull had "categorically guaranteed" such conditions would remain, but his Government wanted to examine the Commonwealth's legislation.

#### **Adelaide advertiser**

#### **No special water deals, warns Rann**

Premier Mike Rann has warned the Howard Government not to make special deals with Victoria in an attempt to save the \$10 billion River Murray rescue plan.

#### **The Murray Valley Standard**

#### **Weir causing irrigators worries**

The prospect of a weir being built near Wellington is causing devastating uncertainty among nearby irrigators in the lower lakes.

27<sup>th</sup>

#### **FarmOnLine**

#### **Murray Darling privatisation a no-go: PM**

Prime Minister John Howard has rejected Victorian claims his takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin is aimed at privatising the system.

As reported yesterday, the federal government will use constitutional powers to assume control of the basin, after failing to convince Victoria to refer its powers to the commonwealth.

The other basin states - Queensland, NSW and South Australia - have already agreed to hand over their powers, leaving Victoria isolated.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks on Wednesday claimed the takeover was 'part of a plan to privatise the water supply'.

"I've got no doubt, once Canberra get their hands on the Murray-Darling Basin system they'll seek to privatise it, to get private capital in, to do what happens in parts of NSW," he said.

Mr Howard denounced the privatisation claims as desperate, stupid and totally wrong.

"It's got nothing to do with privatisation," Mr Howard told ABC Radio in Perth.

He said the federal government was relieving the states of a big financial obligation, and it was about time the Victorian government thought of the national interest.

Water Resources Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, accused the Victorian government of being difficult because they don't want the federal government to have a "win" in an election year.

"That's a really pathetic approach to an issue like this," he told reporters.

Mr Turnbull again said he believed any legal challenge of the takeover would fail.

"The legislation that we will put into the parliament in the next sitting is very squarely within the parameters of the commonwealth's power," he said.

"So if Victoria chose to challenge it, the challenge would be unsuccessful."

Mr Turnbull said he had exhausted every avenue in trying to gain Victoria's backing for the plan.

He labelled as "complete rubbish", Victorian Water Minister, John Thwaites' claim that the state's farmers would be undermined by the federal government's plan to take control of the basin.

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd urged the Federal and Victorian governments to return to the negotiating table.

"No one wants to waste money going to court," he told reporters.

"We want a national outcome on water, but we've also got to give Victoria's farmers a fair shake as well."

SOURCE: AAP

### **Wind Farms the Bane of country life**

National Rural Woman of the Year, Debbie Bain says their needs to be better consultation with rural communities over wind farms.

Famed for building bridges between city and country people, Ms Bain has now found herself in a debate that has bitterly split country communities across the nation, including her own community near Skipton in western Victoria.

46

Some of the turbines set for the Stockyard Hill project will be on Ms Bain's property and while she admits the issue has divided her local community, she would like to see better consultation by wind companies. "There is not enough valid information on them at the moment as to what their benefits really are. There is a perception that the subsidy behind the industry is making turbines more attractive than they ought to be and that is very unclear."

While Ms Bain stands to significantly financially benefit from the Stockyard Hill farm if it goes ahead, she added the wind power companies often did not make the process "a community process" because as wind turbines are placed on private land, "they do affect the entire community."

### **Agency to enforce fair share**

A new authority created to fix the Murray-Darling Basin will be given power to take states to court if they do not comply with a water cap.

Legislation to be introduced next month will establish the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, which will operate alongside the existing commission but with new powers to enforce sustainable management.

A spokesman for Environment and Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the powers would include authority over state water plans and legal enforcement of any breaches of the new cap.

Mr Turnbull and water experts agree Victoria has managed its water responsibly, but say a single authority is needed to manage reform of water use in the basin to sustainable levels.

The new authority will be responsible for setting a revised cap on surface and groundwater use as part of a basin-wide environmental water plan.

It will be charged with improving monitoring systems through the Bureau of Meteorology, as outlined in the \$10billion national water plan.

The buyback of water entitlements and investment in water efficiency infrastructure will begin as soon as the authority is set up, once eligibility requirements are finalised.

Mr Turnbull's spokesman said existing water entitlements would not be altered, and state shares of water maintained under the existing Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. An independent audit of water use by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission has revealed one NSW catchment went over its allocated water cap by 143 gigalitres in 2005-06, while some other catchments in the state are unable to report reliably on water diversions.

Under existing arrangements, the commission effectively has no authority to enforce compliance when breaches occur.

The audit confirmed that Victoria had remained under its cap for a number of years and that the Victorian Government had taken a conservative approach to allocations, holding back until conditions improved.

The new authority will be responsible for managing water quality and salinity in consultation with the four states, and affected communities.

It will be given the power to accredit state water resource plans to ensure they comply with the basin plan, although it is unclear what punitive action the commonwealth could take if a state did not comply.

Under the revised management model, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission would retain management of the Murray River and other programs including salinity interception and natural resource management.

University of Adelaide water expert Mike Young, from the Wentworth Group, said developing an authority from scratch required careful consideration. "The worst thing that could happen is that the new management regime becomes entangled in another never-ending planning process. Plans are a means to an end, not an end in themselves."

**Adelaide Advertiser**  
**Talk: with Gerge Williams**  
**Court action leaves Murray up the river**  
**28<sup>th</sup>**

**The Australian**  
**Agency to enforce fair share**

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47

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**Go easy on emerging states' targets**

Emerging economies such as China should not be pushed too hard in adopting strict carbon emission targets, World Bank president Bob Zoellick will stress at a meeting of APEC finance ministers in Australia next week.

As world focus starts to shift to new environmental platforms after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012, Mr Zoellick yesterday indicated that technology transfers and market-friendly incentives were key to getting developing countries on board with climate change initiatives.

"I think the developed world is going to have to approach this with a strong sense of sensitivity," he said. "When I was in Africa and Latin America, there was a strong message that while developing countries want to be supportive of the climate change issue they don't want it to be at the expense of some of their core development (goals)."



Mr Zoellick travelled through Africa and Latin America last month before he officially started at the bank on July 1, replacing Paul Wolfowitz, whose tenure ended after a controversy involving a job promotion for his partner, who worked at the bank.

Mr Zoellick's trip to Australia marks his first official overseas visit as World Bank president.

The Howard Government has put climate change at the centre of the APEC meetings this year, which culminate in September when national leaders, including US President George W. Bush, attend a summit in Sydney.

Mr Zoellick said the Asia-Pacific was one of the "locomotives of growth" and said discussions at APEC should look at ways that dealt with carbon emissions and energy efficiency issues without crimping the region's dynamism.

China was starting to pay a lot more attention to the environmental costs of growth, he said.

But technology transfers to China that made, for example, coal plants more energy efficient could save China money and help it protect the environment.

He highlighted Australia's \$11.7million contribution to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

### **Farmers offer to mediate on rivers**

Victorian farmers are trying to broker a peace deal between the Bracks and Howard governments in a bid to restart negotiations over the federal takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin and avert a long High Court battle.

The Victorian Farmers Federation has offered to convene crisis talks after John Howard and Steve Bracks this week blamed each other for the breakdown in negotiations that ended with the federal Government vowing to go ahead with a revised plan to seize control of the river system without the key state's support. The head of the federation's water committee, Richard Anderson, said mudslinging had replaced debate over the plan and it was time for both sides to put the national interest ahead of ego and avoid a lawyers' picnic.

48

"Forget about the mudslinging and who reckons they have got the moral high ground," he said. "We are talking about people's livelihoods here."

The farmers fear a drawn-out court battle between the Victorian and federal governments would create uncertainty over water rights, leaving them in limbo. Neither side has accepted the federation's offer yet. After a day of trading insults on Wednesday, Mr Bracks and federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull avoided public comment yesterday. Nationals MP John Forrest, whose call for a referendum on the plan was reported in The Australian yesterday, said he still favoured conducting a referendum on who should control water to avoid a High Court challenge, but a cabinet minister had assured him the commonwealth had strong constitutional standing for its scheme.

"I believe a referendum would be far more decisive. (But) there's no inclination to go that way because of the legal argument that we can survive the High Court challenge," he said.

Mr Turnbull believes the revised plan the commonwealth will put up when federal parliament returns in August will achieve 75 per cent of the original aims even without Victoria. However, the Bracks Government believes the forecast 3000 billion litres of water savings cannot be obtained without co-operation from Victoria because water allocations on the NSW side are heavily overallocated already and the Commonwealth may find it is buying back water that is rarely, if ever, available.

### **Adelaide Advertiser**

### **WATER: Experts fear two bodies in charge of river will lead to mismanagement**

### **Murray rescue hinges on state attitude**

### **States key to Murray rescue**

A final rebuttal by Victoria this week completed the breakdown in Prime Minister John Howard's \$10 billion plan for the Murray-Darling Basin.

It was just the latest setback in a long line of substandard outcomes that have beset the national resource. Federation has always made managing a resource that goes across state borders problematic.

The management of critical resources such as water should not be clouded by vested interests, yet for many years it has.

Even in modern times, when the Prime Minister announced he would overcome constitutional difficulties to deliver true national management, the plan collapsed when one state, Victoria, pulled out.

Australians will still face a situation where more than one body will manage the River Murray. Mr Howard has indicated the Government will introduce a Bill when Parliament resumes in August to establish a new authority to deal with the Murray-Darling Basin. This means the basin would be overseen by two bodies - the existing Murray-Darling Basin Commission and the new authority, which would set a cap on use and administer water arrangements across the basin. The commission was anticipated to have "few functions" in the future, Mr Howard said. But potential for conflict between the two bodies will inevitably remain. Constitutional law expert George Williams said the new federal plan would now be shaped by the "often arcane limitations" of the Constitution. The powers flagged by Mr Howard to implement the plan - the corporations, external affairs and interstate trade and commerce powers - are an "awkward fit", he said. Mr Howard's argument, when he first flagged his rescue plan on Australia Day, was that the issue of water needed to transcend parochial state interests. State borders needed to be obliterated to ensure future water security, he said. He succeeded in obtaining a referral of powers from South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT in February. But Victorian Premier Steve Bracks, who resigned yesterday, has consistently raised concerns. These were exacerbated when revelations emerged about the deal being cobbled together amid a poor consultation processes with key departments. Mr Howard this week said that, despite concessions sought by the states, power ultimately needed to be placed in one set of hands. "I am not willing to have a three-legged horse, which is what we would have been left with if we'd have tried to bump along with the other three states and the ACT," he said. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald told *The Advertiser* that the renegotiated plan was a "less than ideal outcome". "We would have liked to have seen a collaborative, co-operative approach," Mrs Maywald said. She said the situation in relation to the Murray-Darling Basin was "still critical". "Our storage levels are still extremely low," she said. Water experts are divided on whether a renegotiated water deal would be viable.

49

University of Adelaide, professor of Water Economics and Management Mike Young said Australia "as a whole needs to keep talking and find a way to resolve this". Mr Howard's revamped proposal to have two bodies was "suboptimal". He said there was an opportunity for renegotiation with the resignation of Mr Bracks "to see if we can find a way forward". "Fundamentally, we have to get this right. It is not a time to go on compromising about the River Murray," he said. "It has always been painstaking lowest common denominator politics, rather than a regime which is nimble and dynamic and able to serve the interests across the basin as one."

**Adelaidenow.com**

### **New life for water saving project**

A stalled water-saving project for South Australia will proceed after the Federal Government reached an agreement with northern Adelaide irrigators. Federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull last night said he had written to state Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald to seek co-operation in getting the major project off the ground. The \$4.07 million Virginia Pipeline Scheme Extension was announced by Prime Minister John Howard in October, 2005. It was taken up as an Advertiser Watch in May as it remained stalled 18 months after \$2.035 million federal funding was approved. "I have written to Minister Maywald seeking her co-operation," Mr Turnbull said last night. "I call on the South Australian Government to accept the agreements that have been reached between the Australian Government and the Angle Vale irrigators and to fast-track the Government's approval of the project." Under the plan to build an 18km extension to the Bolivar-to-Virginia pipeline, an extra 3000 megalitres of treated wastewater would be pumped to Angle Vale's horticultural area every year.

The treated effluent, diverted for use by irrigators in the north of Adelaide, otherwise would go out to sea. The major sticking point has been issues over groundwater management.

Mr Turnbull last night said it was "unfortunate" the State Government had been unable to meet commitments made in its original proposal, stalling the project.

In an effort to "get the project moving again", Mr Turnbull met irrigators from the Angle Vale area last month.

"We agreed to a package of measures to help recovery of the overdrawn groundwater resources in the Angle Vale area, and to provide recycled water for irrigators so there is no loss of production," he said.

Ms Maywald yesterday said she was pleased with the progress. "We'll await the details of the final agreement to be forwarded from the Commonwealth," she said.

### **Small step in the right direction**

The latest environmental assistance for the Murray-Darling Basin will save only 0.2 per cent of the water diverted from rivers.

The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council's Environmental Water Purchase pilot will buy back 20GL of water from willing sellers.

The small, if welcome, amount to be diverted into ecological sites including South Australia's Chowilla floodplain, Lindsay-Wallpolla Islands, Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth, perhaps is symbolic of the environmental progress made in tiny, incremental steps.

Amid a cacophony of debate further confused by the impact of drought, initiatives have been introduced in the past five years to manage the degradation of the River Murray. Little genuine improvement has been delivered.

The most significant effort is The Living Murray scheme. Established in 2002, the partnership among the federal, NSW, Victorian, South Australian and ACT governments focuses on recovering 500GL of water for the River Murray.

SA made the first contribution a year ago but the 13GL remains small in the context of need.

Salt interception schemes, decried by some as band-aids and hailed by others as a practical engineering solution to the mostly man-made scourge of rising salinity, have made some inroads. Salinity levels, however, remain high. When, in 2003, the Murray's level dropped to its lowest point in 20 years, the Goolwa and Tauwichee barrages were opened, releasing "hundreds of thousands" of litres of water into the Coorong. The equivalent of 150,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools worth flowed through the barrages in 50 days and the State Government mounted an expensive dredging program to keep the Murray Mouth clear.

Any environmental improvements gained remain unclear.

50

In June, 2004, state and federal ministers agreed to a national water initiative to address over-allocation and over-extraction. They also committed \$500 million over five years to return 500GL down the Murray. Flows would focus on six areas including the Chowilla floodplain, the Murray Mouth, Coorong and Lower Lakes.

In April, 2005, it was revealed no water, in fact, had been put into the ailing waterway.

The hope is the passion and determination of people working to save the river will overcome the problems of doing that.

Murray-Darling Basin Commission chief executive Wendy Craik said the sense of urgency about the health of the Murray had been strong since the late 1990s.

"There has been a growth in interest as communities become more environmentally conscious," she said.

"There are some who think the problem is resolved. We are a long way from it being resolved in the basin."

29<sup>th</sup>

**Sunday Mail**

### **Mining union launches climate campaign**

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) has launched a million dollar ad campaign calling for Australia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and a 60 per cent cut in carbon emissions. CFMEU national President Tony Maher today said reducing carbon emissions and adopting a clean energy target were essential to tackling global warming and ensuring the coal industry remained viable.

“For coal communities, there are real opportunities to create sustainable jobs and industries around our response to climate change if the Government takes the lead and sets an enforceable clean energy target,” Mr Maher said.

“As our advertisements show, the economic costs of inaction – in agriculture, in tourism and in mining – are far greater than taking responsible action today.”

30<sup>th</sup>

### **FarmOnline**

#### **\$10B water plan now also opposed by Old Nats**

The Queensland Nationals have withdrawn their support for the Federal Government's bid to take control of the Murray-Darling Basin, in a new setback for the \$10 billion plan.

The party agreed at its Queensland conference in Brisbane on Sunday to withdraw its support for the Commonwealth's draft water bill in its current form.

Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce said a review of the legislation funded by Queensland irrigators showed it did not deliver on some of the promises put forward in the government's original national water plan.

The plan, which would have transferred to the Commonwealth the powers of four states and the ACT over the Murray-Darling basin, is backed by the Queensland Government, as well as the governments of NSW, South Australia and the ACT.

Only Victoria has refused to sign, prompting Prime Minister John Howard to announce federal intervention.

Senator Joyce said a review of the legislation by law firm Clayton Utz revealed it did not deliver on some of the promises contained in the Government's national water plan.

He said the bill failed to guarantee water access rights and entitlements, did not clearly state that there would be no compulsory acquisition of water, and did not provide fair compensation for affected water users.

"The warrants that were given in regard to protection of water rights so the people can go on with their businesses are not apparently there," Senator Joyce said.

"We want to make sure that this is sorted out before we get capped with this legislation."

The decision is a further blow to the federal government, which has said it, will legislate to take control of the Murray-Darling despite Victoria's refusal to support the plan.

SOURCE: AAP and *FarmOnline*.

#### **Bracks exit puts Murray negotiations back on track**

Senior Federal Government figures believe their \$10 billion plan for the Murray Darling could yet be saved following the retirement of Victorian Premier Steve Bracks.

Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile, Treasurer Peter Costello, and Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull have all lined up over the weekend to display a willingness to restart negotiations if Victoria's new Premier - almost certainly John Brumby - is also keen.

Victoria has been the only State not to sign up to the Federal Government's \$10 billion plan for water security for the Basin.

As a result, the Prime Minister on Tuesday announced he would call on constitutional powers to assume powers from Victoria to help manage the Basin.

At the time Mr Bracks said he would no longer continue negotiating with the Commonwealth and accused Mr Howard of killing the plan.

51

Mr Bracks had until Friday to say whether he would or would not sign an intergovernmental agreement, which would be the only way his State could access up to \$3 billion in off-farm infrastructure funding. But Mr Costello and Mr Vaile now both believe the resignation of Mr Bracks and his Water Minister John Thwaites has provided an eleventh hour reprieve for the original package.

"It remains to be seen as to whether a change in leadership in Victoria changes the attitude of the Victorian Government on this issue but we remain focussed on dealing with this issue," Mr Vaile said.

Mr Turnbull says his door is open to new talks, and he will be actively pursuing that with Mr Brumby. However, he cautioned that as a member of Victoria's Cabinet, Mr Brumby had been party to the obstruction of the original package.

"Mr Bracks always said that his State's position was based on a decision by Cabinet and Mr Brumby, who I gather is to be the next Premier, was a very leading member of that cabinet, so I don't ... I'm not assuming that there will be a change of heart but I hope there will be," Mr Turnbull said.

Mr Turnbull also revealed that negotiations had fallen over due to Mr Bracks demanding that Victoria be treated separately from the other Basin State signatories.

"Victoria said yes we will sign but not the deal that everybody else has, we want a deal — and just so you know what they were proposing - they wanted to provide that only those parts of the Commonwealth Water Bill that is supported by Victoria's policy position should apply as a law of Victoria and they went on to say to me, 'Victoria would not be defined for the purposes of the Commonwealth's Water Bill as a Basin State'," he said. Mr Turnbull said that if Mr Brumby maintains the same position, the Commonwealth would be ready to introduce its legislation at the next parliamentary sitting.

"It won't achieve everything that we could have achieved with Victoria's support but it will achieve the vast bulk of our reform objectivism," he said.

"We will have a basin-wide water plan, a basin-wide cap, we'll have a basin-wide plan for salinity, we'll have a basin-wide environmental water plan and most importantly we will have over 10 years, \$10B of investment — not all in the Basin, Murray-Darling Basin, but around Australia to ensure that our irrigated agriculture becomes as efficient as any in the world."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

### **Bush respected Bracks but didn't always agree**

Victorian Leader of The Nationals, Peter Ryan, has thanked outgoing Victorian Premier Steve Bracks for his contribution to public life, praising his integrity despite not always agreeing with his policies for rural and regional areas.

In a shock move, Mr Bracks this morning resigned as premier after a Cabinet meeting.

He informed Mr Ryan of his decision by phone immediately before his press conference.

"Steve Bracks leaves public life with his head held high after a distinguished Parliamentary career," Mr Ryan said.

"While we have been fierce political rivals, Steve and I have always maintained a level of professionalism in our respective dealings.

"While we may not have agreed on many policy issues affecting the future of country Victorians, I have respected his approach to the difficult role of leading this State."

Similarly, Victorian Farmers' Federation president, Simon Ramsay, has congratulated Mr Bracks on his achievements during his eight years as premier.

"The VFF has enjoyed a productive working relationship with the Victorian Government during Mr Bracks's time as leader and we look forward to working towards equally productive outcomes with the new leadership," Mr Ramsay said.

"On behalf of the VFF I acknowledge Steve Bracks's contribution to public life and join with other Victorians in wishing him and his family well for the future."

Deputy Premier John Thwaites is tipped to announce his own resignation at a press conference this afternoon. Treasurer John Brumby is the frontrunner to replace Mr Bracks at the helm.

SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, Victoria, weekly rural newspaper, posting breaking news updates on *FarmOnline*.

### **Farmers change course in water dispute**

The Victorian Farmers' Federation has dramatically changed tack in their attempt to reach a compromise over the Murray-Darling scheme, throwing their energy into direct negotiations with the Howard Government after the failure of a national agreement. The VFF yesterday wrote to Federal Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull to resolve outstanding issues about seasonal water allocations, water charges and the capping of water trading.

The letter requests a response within 48 hours so the VFF can put its final position on the \$10 billion Murray-Darling plan to Victorian Water Minister John Thwaites, at a scheduled meeting on Monday.

52

If the VFF decides to back the Federal Government's controversial Murray-Darling plan, it would be a serious blow to the Bracks Government, which opposes the plan. The Howard Government announced earlier this week it would use its constitutional powers to take control of the basin — which stretches across Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia — after failing to win the Bracks Government's support for its plan. Victoria has indicated it could challenge any such move in the High Court. VFF president Simon Ramsay said given the political environment and the threats of High Court action, negotiating directly with Mr Turnbull and then making a judgement call on the Basin scheme seemed the best way forward.

"We felt that with the Commonwealth and states each responding to each other on the basis each are seeking High Court challenges, we felt that this was getting too messy and we needed to deal direct to solve the problems," he said. Victoria has been the only Basin State not to sign on to the agreement, arguing that its defiant stance is to protect the position of farmers. But Mr Ramsay said if the VFF backed the plan, the Bracks Government would not be able to argue it represented Victorian irrigators. "Without our support ... it would be very difficult for the Bracks Government to continue to hold out on the basis they are doing it for the good of Victoria's farming community," he said.

Last night Geoff Fraser, a spokesman for Victorian Water Minister John Thwaites, said Victoria had been negotiating in good faith until the Prime Minister "killed off" the process.

"The Farmers' Federation agrees with Victoria that the security of farmers' water rights needs to be protected and that seasonal water allocations need to remain in Victoria," he said.

SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

### **The Australian**

#### **Water rules 'thing of the past'**

Water restrictions can be lifted within five years in all capital cities - and it does not require drought-breaking rain to do it. **(By waterproofing cities – especially those on coast lines – the need for reliance on the River Murray would be removed – its not rocket science – the biggest problem is the fact that the cheapest way for many cities and large rural towns to acquire water is just take it from the water courses in the Murray-Darling Basin)**

Charging more for water for non-essential purposes, using private investment to expand supplies through desalination and recycling projects, and allowing trading between country and city can deliver all the water needed.

That is the conclusion of a report on the nation's infrastructure needs, released to The Australian. Prepared by Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, which represents government as well as industry bodies, the report includes a list of more than 100 priority projects ranging from road and rail links to water and energy schemes and schools, hospitals and affordable housing plans.

The goal is to refurbish Australia's capital stock within the next 10 years and set up the nation for continued strong economic growth over the next 20 years.

The report recommends the appointment of a federal minister for infrastructure, as well as an office of national infrastructure co-ordination. IPA head and former Kennett government minister Mark Birrell said that, surprisingly, no broadly agreed list of infrastructure requirements existed.

"This decade we have the opportunity to deliver on age-old plans like a four-lane highway linking Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, an efficient freight rail link up the east coast of Australia, the completion of the ring roads around our largest capital cities, renewing the stock of government schools across the country and replacing super-specialist public hospitals in every capital city," he said.

Mr Birrell said a combination of healthy state and federal budgets, the scope to increase government debt levels and superannuation funds that were looking for investments opened the way for large-scale infrastructure funding. The report suggests a two-tier system for residential water. Current prices would be charged for consumption for essential needs -- say 150 kilolitres a year. Discretionary use above this level for purposes such as lawns and pools would attract the full market price, which could be as much as double the present Sydney rate of \$1.42/KL. Average water use around Australia is now 376KL a household, although many families who do not water lawns or have a pool use much less. The report suggests expanding the market in water to allow trading between rural and urban uses, thus allowing water to flow to its highest value uses. Tradeable entitlements also could be assigned to large commercial users and competing retail water businesses. The energy sector will require \$30 billion-\$35 billion in investment by 2020. A true national energy market should be established, starting with a comprehensive restructuring in NSW where the industry remains in government hands. A meaningful debate of the nuclear option is premature without fundamental reforms to create a national market.

Government decisions are needed to allow a fibre-to-the-node broadband rollout within two to three years, the report says.

#### **Passenger trains on track to go green**

SAKU, Japan: Winding through rice paddies and lazily blowing its whistle along bubbly creeks, a two-car train in rural northern Japan is the latest entrant in the battle against global warming.

Following its runaway success with hybrid cars, Japan is bringing the world hybrid trains. Regular passenger runs are set to begin tomorrow on a short mountain route, the first time a diesel-electric hybrid train will be put into commercial service.

"It's part of our efforts to be green," Yasuaki Kikuchi, a spokesman for East Japan Railway Co, said during an exclusive trial run for Associated Press.

Compared to cars, trains are a relatively small contributor to global warming.

In the US, railways contribute just 4 per cent of transport-related emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming.

But the popularity of hybrid cars, such as Toyota's best-selling Prius, is helping to boost interest in hybrid trains.

Railway companies around the world, including Amtrak in the US and Germany's Deutsche Bahn AG, are working on or investigating the technology.

Cost remains a hurdle. The Japanese train, which boosts fuel efficiency by 20 per cent and reduces emissions by up to 60 per cent, is priced at nearly 200 million yen (\$2 million), twice as much as a standard train, Kikuchi said. The Kiha E200, as it is known, is equipped with a diesel engine, two electric motors under each of its cars and lithium ion batteries on the roof.

With the word "hybrid" splashed in silver on its side, the otherwise normal-looking train rolls quietly out of Nakagomi station, powered by its four electric motors.

The diesel engine kicks in with a rumble only when needed -- to climb a hill or if the batteries run low.

The batteries are recharged when the train slows down. After the power is switched off, the motors continue to turn for a while, and that energy -- wasted in a non-hybrid train -- is used to recharge the batteries.

AP

### **A future run on star power**

Harnessing fusion energy, which powers the sun and stars, has been the stuff of science fiction since it was discovered by Adelaide physicist and later South Australian governor Mark Oliphant in the 1930s. But almost 80 years later in the south of France, a team of the world's leading physicists are about to start building the biggest science experiment, which they hope may deliver the secure energy supply Oliphant only dreamed of.

The threat of climate change has accelerated a global search for abundant, cheap and sustainable sources of energy to sustain our lifestyle. Fusing tiny molecules together in a nuclear process can generate vast quantities of such energy. While the resulting energy is greater than that from the conventional nuclear fission of existing power stations, the physics and material science to deliver it has proved far more elusive. Until now.

Construction begins next year on the world's first full-sized fusion reactor at the vast Cadarache research centre near Marseilles, a 19sqkm science park that is like a Disneyland for physicists. If all goes to plan the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor will be operational by 2016. The \$17 billion experiment is being funded by an international consortium of governments, the culmination of decades of research and experiments across the world.

A starting contribution of \$1 billion is needed for direct participation. Australia is not among the funding nations, which include the US, the European Union, China, India, Japan, South Korea and Russia. But research on the myriad different aspects of fusion technology is going on in universities across the globe, including the Australian National University in Canberra.

If all goes well for ITER, a fully operational 500-megawatt demonstration reactor is planned to come on line by 2040. And there's the rub: it's a running gag among scientists that fusion energy is always going to be 30 years away. Although the basic principles of fusion energy are effortlessly simple, making the reaction happen and capturing the energy are mind-bogglingly difficult. Conventional nuclear power stations harness the explosive energy created from nuclear fission, the process of splitting very big molecules, normally isotopes or forms of uranium or plutonium. These chain reactions release enormous energy that requires sophisticated technology used in reactors to control the heat so it can be harnessed to drive steam turbines in the same way that coal or gas is used. It's like a giant kettle. Fusion reactors are like kettles, too, but could generate three times more energy than fission reactors by smashing tiny molecules together.

The experimental fusion reactors built across the world run on special isotopes of hydrogen called deuterium and tritium, derived from ordinary water.

These ingredients are simply hydrogen molecules loaded up with one and two extra neutrons, which are particles of an atom. The big cost and withering technology is due to the incredible conditions needed to make these atoms fuse to release vast quantities of heat. To do this the electrons need to be removed and the molecules smashed into each other at super high velocity. This requires heating them to temperatures of about 100 million C, as hot as the centre of the sun.

But that's not all. The reaction must take place in a near total vacuum and needs super-magnets that are cooled almost to absolute zero.

The process is likened to holding a jelly in place using only rubber bands. That was a problem for the early researchers in the '70s and it turned out to be much harder than everyone expected because that jelly behaved in ways that people didn't expect, says ITER research physicist Neill Taylor. "It's taken until 10 years ago to reach a kind of a breakthrough where we learned how to control this beast and it can be made to behave in the way that we can require."

Fusion reactors require large amounts of energy to make them run, but the theory is they will deliver that back 10 times over once they are up and running. The advantage of this is safety. While conventional nuclear fission reactors are at risk of the reaction running out of control and exploding, fusion reactors are the opposite: so hard to get going that a flick of the switch will instantaneously stop the process.

Taylor says the trial reactor at Cadarache will be the culmination of global research to overcome the twin hurdles of understanding the complex physics of fusion reactions coupled with the radical technology needed to deliver it. The new full-sized reactor will cost about \$8 billion to build.

The scale of the investment reflects the growing confidence among physicists that fusion has a real chance of succeeding, he says. "We have a pretty high level of confidence," he says. "We think the physics is right because it's based on extrapolation from a very large number of experiments and a very large number of different facilities. But it's not certain. It's an experiment and we expect to still learn things in the process."

The technology is not without its critics or its risks. One of the isotopes of hydrogen, tritium, is radioactive, albeit with a relatively short half-life. The release of neutrons, which transmit the energy, exposes the fusion reactor to low levels of radioactivity, but again at much lower levels than fission reactors. Greenpeace in France is opposed to the research, saying the funds should be spent on renewable technology that can be used now and that it has concerns about the radioactivity generated.

While an Australian may have set the ball rolling, local research in fusion technology has been waning in the past decade, due to a fall in research and investment in conventional sciences such as physics. The ANU is the last important centre here for research into fusion technology.

Down but not out. An Australian ITER forum is still working to stay involved in associated research and the Plasma Research Laboratory in Canberra is about to pitch a \$10 million, 10-year strategic plan to the federal Government to revise and reinvigorate domestic research. ANU professor John Howard says researchers have not been active enough in explaining the potential of this research.

"Unless we manage to revive our program, it could disappear altogether beyond 2010," Howard says. "What we're proposing to do is build fusion capability in Australia through a fellowship scheme to build a contribution to ITER, and to reinvigorate the program here so our national facility becomes a focus once again for postdoctoral research in fusion technology in Australia and for international people to come here and collaborate with us."

Howard says fusion technology is developing twice as fast as computer chip technology, reflecting enormous gains made in materials science and advanced physics.

"Over the years fusion has been a tremendously successful venture and I don't think the wider community yet appreciates what sort of gains have been made there," he says.

"It's like a gift if we can make it work."

#### **Adelaide Advertiser**

#### **Thousands plant seed for the future**

Sun, rain and a touch of human help will be needed to encourage 38,000 cypress pines to take root over the next few months.

#### **Wineries ready for biggest taste test**

Winemakers can expect the flavours associated with a wine region and vintage to be altered as climate change affects grape growing areas.



### **Stand by for our hottest year on record**

This year is on track to be South Australia and Australia's hottest year on record.

### **River rescue plan is ready to go**

Prime Minister John Howard's revamped plan for reviving the Murray-Darling Basin could be revealed as early as today.

55

### **ENERGY: Price differences stack up to megawatts in the renewable energy market**

#### **Marion council leads the charge**

City of Marion Council became a GreenPower customer in 2001, purchasing 25 per cent GreenPower for three of its major sites.

#### **Green revolution gains power base**

More than 56,000 South Australians are choosing to buy GreenPower electricity a figure that has nearly doubled in the past twelve months.

31<sup>st</sup>

### **FarmOnLine**

#### **Farmers a top priority for Brumby**

Incoming Victorian Premier John Brumby has unveiled an ambitious new policy agenda for Victoria, listing farmers among his top priorities. As he moved to stamp his authority on the State Government, Mr Brumby pointedly distinguished himself from the outgoing Premier, Steve Bracks.

He promised a new era of decisive leadership, with Victoria taking a more aggressive stance against the other states in the competition for major projects.

"I will be inclusive but I will also be decisive, because I think that's what the people of Victoria want," said Mr Brumby, who will be elected premier unopposed at today's special 11am meeting of Labor MPs. At his first media conference as premier-in-waiting, Mr Brumby yesterday identified six policy areas in which he wanted to change emphasis or move more quickly than his predecessor, saying: "We can always do better."

Mr Brumby foreshadowed major policy statements in the first months of his premiership on public transport, preventive health, education, major projects, planning and urban development, and support for farmers.

"If you look over the last few years, it's hard to imagine a more difficult set of circumstances for farmers (with) drought, bushfire, flood — they've had the lot," Mr Brumby said.

"We provide pretty good services to farmers, but again, I think we can do better.

"So I will be examining ways in which we can better deliver services to our farmers."

SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

### **Joyce won't threaten water deal: Howard**

Prime Minister John Howard is confident the Commonwealth's Murray-Darling rescue plan is still viable, despite objections by the Queensland Nationals and the Queensland Farmers' Federation. The party's state conference voted on the weekend to oppose the draft legislation in its current form. Queensland Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce says the proposed bill does not deliver on some of the promises put forward when the plan was announced. He says the bill fails to guarantee water access rights and entitlements; does not rule out compulsory acquisition of water; and does not provide fair compensation for affected water users.

A spokesman for federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull said the government was hopeful it could address the concerns of Queensland farmers.

Mr Howard was equally optimistic.

"Mr Turnbull and Mr Joyce are discussing the matter and I think it will be satisfactorily resolved," he said today.

The developments follow warnings from the Queensland Farmers' Federation, based on an analysis of the proposed legislation by law firm Clayton Utz, that substantial changes will be needed to provide adequate protection for primary producers.

"The Queensland water planning process has been "the most comprehensive in the country, lasting nearly 10 years, based on sound science and hydrological data, and any water allocations that fall within the caps provided in the approved water resource plans should be recognised and protected in the Federal bill," QFF chief executive officer, John Cherry, said.

"QFF was part of an irrigators' delegation that met with Minister Turnbull on Friday and was pleased that the Minister remained open to further amendment to the bill."

SOURCE: AAP and *Queensland Country Life*.

### **More water for Lachlan, NSW, irrigators**

Modest inflows into Wyangala Dam have resulted in increased water allocations for high security and stock and domestic water users in the Lachlan Valley for 2007-08.

State Water Minister, Phil Koperberg, said today that storage levels in the dam have risen by 79,000 megalitres to 192,400ML since 2007-08 water allocations had been announced on July 1.

He said stock and domestic water allocations would rise from 15pc to 50pc for the full year, high security from 10pc to 30pc, and general security users would be able to carryover 10pc of any water remaining in their 2006-07 accounts.

56

This was "great news" for landholders and businesses in the valley and came when many irrigators were considering options for watering winter crops, he said.

Wyangala Dam is now 16pc full.

SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW's weekly rural newspaper, posting breaking news updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **Brumby holds the line and rejects \$10B Murray plan**

Incoming Victorian Premier John Brumby has dashed hopes of a change of heart by Victoria, refusing yesterday to sign up to the Federal Government's \$10 billion plan for the Murray Darling.

Branding the plan a "nightmare" that would have created "a seventh state in Australia", Mr Brumby said there was no change of position on his part.

"If the Federal Government introduced legislation next week that was the Victorian model, we'd support it, but at this stage I think that's unlikely," Mr Brumby said.

But the Howard Government is still confident it can make the changes required to win support from farmers and irrigators for its new - albeit weakened - version of the plan.

By remaining opposed to the Government's idea, Victoria could be left without billions of dollars in investment in new water infrastructure.

Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull was yesterday negotiating with the Queensland Nationals over the explicit guarantees they wanted to see in the legislation, which is due to be finalised early this week.

He will also meet the National Farmers Federation over the next few days, with NFF water taskforce chairman Laurie Arthur yesterday tipping a resolution by the end of this week.

Mr Turnbull predicted the obstacles could be overcome.

"We will have a basin-wide plan for salinity, we'll have a basin-wide environment plan and, most importantly, we will have over 10 years, \$10 billion of investment," he said.

But the Victorian Farmers Federation still has its reservations.

After a meeting between Mr Turnbull and farm groups last Friday, VFF president Simon Ramsay said there was now consensus among farmers that the plan should not go ahead without Victoria.

"Malcolm Turnbull certainly got the message that Victoria has to be part of this national water plan, otherwise it wouldn't get any national support from the industry," he said.

Mr Ramsay said the VFF would consider its position after the latest draft of the national water plan legislation was released.

Last week the VFF changed direction in its negotiations, focusing its attention on dealing with the Howard Government, rather than Victoria.

But the NFF's Mr Arthur said while the coalition of farm and irrigators groups wanted Victoria in, it did not want the deal derailed.

"We do have some concerns still with the draft legislation, but we expect they will be sorted by the end of the week pretty much," he said.

"If it came down to going ahead with what we have got and not having Victoria, the consensus was that they want the plan to go ahead."

Senator Joyce cited legal advice prepared by Clayton Utz, which found that the guarantees made to irrigators were not explicitly in the draft bill.

Senator Joyce wants guarantees of no compulsory acquisition of water and proper compensation — otherwise he will not vote for the bill.

SOURCE: *The Age*, Vic, a Fairfax Media publication.

### **WA farm groups tackle climate change**

Western Australia's farm lobby groups are the latest to join the clamour calling for a better go for agriculture as State and Federal governments set their climate change policies. The Pastoralists and Graziers' Association and WA Farmers remained relatively quiet on the climate change issue and carbon trading at the beginning of the year. The earlier prospects of another below-average season kicked the state lobby groups into action and coincided with a stepped-up campaign on climate change at the Federal level.

Carbon trading schemes, genetically modified crops, drought assistance, water licenses and paddock to table produce prices have all been drawn into the climate change debate.

Last week the PGA accused the State Government of making opportunistic policy decisions and affecting the ability of WA farmers to cope with climate and market change.

PGA economics director, Slade Brockman, said the State Government's moratorium on GM crops was a serious case of urban agenda setting.

Mr Brockman said the policies indicated there was no concern for the devastating impacts on WA farmers.

He said food producers in WA were threatened more by government policy-making incompetence, than by long-term climate change.

57

"The moratorium on GM cropping technology has already been exposed as a furphy," he said.

"But the green lobby continues to hold back Agriculture Minister Kim Chance when he should be embracing this technology as a means of increasing productivity and keeping WA agriculture competitive.

"Farmers can adapt to climate change, we have done it before.

"It is harder to adapt to the regulatory changes that arise on a yearly, if not monthly, basis."

WA Farmers climate change spokesperson, Dale Park, said farmers had a massive role to play in carbon trading, offsets and sequestration and needed to be at the policy table now, not brought in at the last minute.

"The worrying factor about the current debate is that as both sides of politics develop their policies in the public arena, the focus is on political point scoring rather than realistic actions in dealing with the problems," he said.

"Now is not a time for making policy on the run.

"The current focus on the stationary energy sector is understandable, but agriculture can't stay in the shadows any longer.

"We know the sector is unique in the challenges that it presents, but that is no reason not to address them."

SOURCE: *Farm Weekly*, WA's leading rural newspaper, posting updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

### **Floods needed for Goondi cotton planting**

Cotton planting is still over two months away, but growers across the eastern seaboard are crossing their fingers for floods in order to plant this year's crop with confidence.

One such grower is NSW/Queensland border grower, Brian Duddy, Goondiwindi, who went without a crop last season and has significant worries that the coming season will deal him the same hand.

However, Mr Duddy said he was geared up for planting and would still race into a significant area of cotton if the water situation allowed.

"We have ground that has fertiliser under it from last year and we are going to put MAP on the rest of it, so if the season breaks in a flurry we will be right to plant," he said.

"But we are talking about some sort of flood so we can pump high-flow water in order to have any confidence."

Recent cotton price rises have also been enough to raise prospects, with Mr Duddy estimating that lint and seed prices had managed to put cotton's gross margin ahead of other crops in his suite of options.

"One of the things that will hurt growing grain crops is the price of fertiliser," he said.

"They are going to be hard enough on cotton but if we are going to irrigate sorghum with high fertiliser prices it is a pretty marginal proposition."

SOURCE: Extract from *Australian Cotton Outlook*, out August 9.

### **AWA**

PM Howard announced that the Commonwealth will legislate to implement its \$10bn Water Plan without Victoria if that state failed to sign up by July 27, after protracted negotiations had thus far failed to reach agreement while approval had been given by NSW, Queensland, South Australia and the ACT.

Phase 2 of Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling which focuses on stormwater reuse, managed aquifer recharge and recycled water for drinking is underway. 'Australian Guidelines for Water Recycling: Managing Health and Environmental Risks (Phase 2): Augmentation of Drinking Water Supplies' draft is now available for public comment. Written submissions to Haemish Middleton ([Email](#)) by Friday 21 September 2007.

Premier Peter Beattie has announced that Queensland Government will implement the boundary changes and amalgamations recommended in the independent Local Government Reform Commission report, handed down last Friday, reducing the number of Councils in the state from 156 to 72.

The Australian Government has reached an agreement with Angle Vale irrigators that will enable the Virginia Pipeline Scheme Extension to proceed. The construction of more than 18km of pipelines will supply more than 3000 ML of treated water to irrigators, to assist productivity and the recovery of overdrawn groundwater resources in the area.

Location and demand, community "ownership" and a triple-bottom line approach should drive water supply choices, with the overriding requirement that water be "fit for purpose" according to Dr John Radcliffe, a National Water Commissioner, writing in *Focus*, the quarterly issues magazine of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE).

Victorian farmers, who have been behind the State Government's key rationale for resisting the Commonwealth takeover of the Murray Darling Basin, have declared that they want to participate and negotiate directly with the Federal Government.

Dr Charles Essery, adjunct Professor at the University of Western Sydney, is critical of the decision by the New South Wales Government to build desalination plants. Dr. Essery argues that desalination increases the consumption of water, which in turn increases pollution of waterways.

A new 'fast sludge' process using advanced biotechnology will get a major boost from the International Science Linkages fund which will help Australian molecular biologists link with leading European

researchers to advance knowledge of the process. The aerobic granular sludge process will increase the treatment process throughput and eliminate the dewatering process.

The first section of the Queensland Government \$9 billion Water Grid 7.3km pipeline connecting the Bundamba Advanced Water Treatment Plant with Swanbank Power Station near Ipswich has been completed. Using recycled water at Swanbank will eventually free up to 20 ML a day of Wivenhoe Dam water.

Despite media reports to the contrary, businesses enrolled in Sydney Water's Every Drop Counts Program have achieved record savings of water from their operations over the past year. These include Bluescope Steel, Investa Property Group, Boral Quarries, The GPT group and AstraZeneca.

A Drinking Water Quality Management System Auditor Certification Scheme has been developed by RABQSA International in collaboration with the Victorian Department of Human Services, VicWater and WSAA. Certification under this scheme is mandatory to conduct regulatory audits in Victoria, and is applicable nationally. The next certification course will be held at RMIT in Melbourne on 31st August.

760 guests attended WaterAid Australia's Four Plates with Four Greats dinner in Adelaide, where the food and entertainment reflected the regions in which WaterAid works. The evening raised a fantastic \$210,000 to help fund water projects in Papua New Guinea.

DEFRA is developing a new national water strategy to set out a coherent policy framework to underpin commitments for water availability and quality. It will outline the UK Government's evolving priorities with a focus on water policy for maintaining quality and safety through a climate change lens.

Emergency services in Britain are stretched as sewerage plants and water treatment plants after flooding, cuts to power services and flooded rivers. Residents in towns in Gloucestershire are being supplied with bottled water and advised to minimise use of all water.

An IPA Report says water restrictions can be lifted within 5 years in all capital by charging more for water for non-essential purposes, using private investment to expand supplies through desalination and recycling projects, and allowing trading between country and city to deliver all the water needed. The Australian, July 30.

PM Howard has challenged Premier Brack's contention that the Commonwealth intends to privatise delivery of water services through taking control of the Murray Darling Basin system. Herald Sun, July 26.

PM Howard has defended his decision to take control of the Murray-Darling Basin without the support of Victoria by arguing that rivers flow across state borders thereby making them irrelevant. The Age, July 24.

The NSW Government has brushed off criticism that it is allowing some big businesses to use more water while forcing residential consumers in Sydney to cut their water use. Sydney Morning Herald, July 24.

