

“Snippets Plus”

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From 22nd

FarmOnLine

Labor to 'speed up' \$10bn water plan

Labor says if elected to Government this weekend, it will bring forward funding in the \$10 billion national plan for water security, to tackle urgent water problems in the Murray Darling Basin. The ALP water policy, released on Tuesday, has committed Labor to accelerating water reform in the basin, while also consulting farmers on the management of water for farming and the environment. Labor says it will spend up to \$400m fixing evaporation at Menindee Lakes and a further \$124m on the Wimmera Mallee pipeline. It will partner Adelaide if it proceeds with a desalination plant and give \$12m to fund a "missing link" in a pipeline between Warren and Nyngan, in western NSW. Labor has promised to "streamline" the Federal water bureaucracy and reduce the number of bodies involved in managing the basin. Labor will also bring forward funding to buy licenses from irrigators to speed up the reform process, but has stressed this will be done in a fair and equitable way through willing sellers only, and will not work to distort the water market. The National Farmers Federation said it had been calling on the Labor Party to publicly commit to the \$10 billion plan for some time and welcome the official bipartisan support. An NFF statement said a public commitment by Labor to work with farmers was "great news". "NFF is pleased to see a public commitment from the Labor party, that they will ensure adjustment, is both fair and equitable and that water licenses will be purchased on just and fair terms from willing sellers."

NFF welcomes, then slams, Labor ag policy

The National Farmers Federation has changed its tune on Labor's agricultural policy - welcoming it when it was released yesterday, then slamming it today. Labor yesterday revealed a plan with a heavy focus on preparing farmers for climate change - a major policy priority for NFF. The climate change initiatives were warmly welcomed by the National Farmers Federation yesterday, with some concern expressed over the loss of the FarmBis training program in the last line of its statement. Yesterday's release said the commitment by the Labor Party to work closely with farmers to adapt to a changing climate, is a clear recognition of the importance of this issue to rural and regional Australians. "Farmers need access to the right tools to effectively manage the risks and capitalise on the opportunities of a changing climate," NFF president, David Crombie, said. "We are pleased the Labor party has committed to work with farmers on this challenge and have highlighted the issue in their agriculture statement." Today the NFF has issued a new release saying it is "bewildered" by Labor's plans to "dump" the Advancing Australian Agriculture (AAA) FarmBis program. "Labor Leader Kevin Rudd talks about the importance of education and training and of an 'education revolution' platform, but is axing a program that trains farmers to improve their skills and capacity in business and natural resource management," Mr. Crombie said in the second statement. "In responding to Labor's agriculture statement, the NFF sought clarification from Labor that their new agriculture commitments would not be funded at the expense of existing successful programs. "That assurance has not been forthcoming. Indeed, after carefully reviewing budget papers, it has emerged that rather than "reprioritise" some programs, Labor is actually shutting down the FarmBis program." Labor's primary industries spokesman, Kerry O'Brien, has conceded that Labor would redirect more than \$190 million from existing agricultural programs in order to fund its new climate commitments. Senator O'Brien said given the very low take-up of the programs, particularly within the AAA scheme, and the priority from the farm sector to address climate change, Labor decided to redirect the money in the agriculture portfolio. He insisted there had been no reduction in the overall funding of the portfolio. Senator O'Brien said a government survey found AAA programs like rural partnerships; climate variability, farm innovation and women in rural industries had a take-up of 4pc or less. Senator O'Brien invited farmers to approach him if Labor wins the election and look at other ways of redirecting money within the portfolio if they wished to keep those specific education and training programs. While he said he hadn't closed the door on FarmBis, Senator O'Brien made it clear it was the new initiatives, or the old ones like FarmBis and AAA – not both. SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Campaign focuses on climate change

Climate change was placed higher on the election agenda earlier this week with a series of advertisements in metropolitan dailies urging full government engagement with the issue. An alliance that includes Queensland farm lobby group AgForce, Westpac bank, and religious leaders ran the advertisements. The initiative, co-ordinated by the Australian Conservation Foundation, highlights a level of public concern about climate change. It claims the urgency of climate change has not been reflected in the political campaign to date.

It also suggests that climate change may have a positive side: the formation of alliances aimed at long-term strategy rather than short-term self-interest. SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW

The Australian - Stopping deforestation, logging will cost billions

It will cost at least \$11.1 billion to stop deforestation in developing countries, and activities aimed at halting logging could bump up timber prices and drive some workers into unemployment. The warnings came from Lucaen Tacconi from the ANU's Crawford School of Economics and Government, who is calling for governments to support the inclusion of the prevention of deforestation and forest degradation in a post-Kyoto agreement, to create a market for carbon credits from these activities. In a climate change policy paper released yesterday, Associate Professor Tacconi says land use change and forestry contribute 17 cent cent of total greenhouse gas emissions. Deforestation mostly occurs in tropical, low-income countries, which often have "challenging governance conditions", he says. "Only five of the top 20 deforesting countries are classified as 'free' - that is, they have functioning democracies. "The other countries have outright dictatorships or democratic systems that are not functioning well," he says. This presents significant challenges to initiatives aimed at reducing deforestation through financial incentives, the paper says. Countries that donate funds should consider support for forest governance reforms. In March, the Howard Government announced a \$200million global initiative to tackle deforestation in developing countries. In another policy paper released by the ANU yesterday, Will Steffen, the director of the Fenner School of Environment and Society, lists a number of policy challenges for governments attempting to deal with climate change. Professor Steffen says equity issues - focused on the divide between industrialised and developing countries - cloud the international debate. He points out that the time difference between action and visible positive impacts makes it hard for governments to act. "The challenge for the policy process is that no matter how vigorously we reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the next two decades, it will virtually have no effect on the extent of climate change that we experience during this period," Professor Steffen says. "What government can convince its electorate to make possibly significant sacrifices now, with no perceptible effect for 25 years?" he writes.

Adelaide now - \$8m deal to cut cost of energy

An energy firm has won an \$8 million contract to supply power to buildings and services to 24 councils. Power Direct will provide renewable and non-renewable energy to services that use more than 160 kilowatt hours of power a year as part of the three-year contract. Local Government Association Corporate Services chief executive Paul Slater said the deal would deliver cost and service advantages to the communities involved. "This is a fine example of the power of bulk purchasing, of service sharing between councils and of councils working together to get the best outcomes in services and savings for their communities," he said. Alexandrina, Burnside, Charles Sturt, Marion, Mitcham, Victor Harbor, Mount Barker and Port Lincoln councils are among those in the agreement. West Torrens chief executive Trevor Starr said it was a continuation of an ongoing contract begun five years ago. "The energy will be used for street lighting, large buildings such as libraries and the Council Civic Centre and aged care accommodation," he said. Association executive director Wendy Campana said it was "pleasing" to see councils joining forces in an attempt to save energy. "We can generally get very good savings when doing things in bulk rather than councils doing it individually," she said.

AWB hammered by drought

Agribusiness giant AWB has posted a 53.3 per cent fall in full year earnings due to the impact of 12 months of drought. But the farm services firm remains upbeat about its future because of its rapid diversification and growth of other business divisions. Its underlying profit before tax and amortisation fell from \$147.107 million to \$91.789 million, in line with the company's guidance. AWB managing director Gordon Davis said he was pleased with the results, even though the figure was down because all sections were profitable and it was a resilient business with a great franchise. Mr Davis said the result was achieved despite one of the worst droughts on record, the loss of its wheat export monopoly and company restructuring. "The management team successfully stabilised operating performance and we are now increasingly focussed on the next phase - growing the business," Mr Davis said. "Our overall strategy will increase shareholder returns by continuing to rebuild and grow the business domestically and internationally." It follows a Federal Government inquiry into corruption in the company's trade with former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's regime. Mr Davis said about 40 per cent of its earnings were generated offshore and not affected by drought in Australia, with only 10 per cent of earnings directly related to bulk wheat exports. "The outlook for agribusiness is very positive given the international growth of the biofuels industry, the global shortage of agricultural commodities and record prices," he said. Strategic priorities for AWB included continuing to build the Landmark and Landmark Financial Services businesses and continuing to develop its promising international commodities trade.

The international commodities trade had identified itself as "a great business", while its domestic operation had recorded a small improvement in the second half. Mr Davis said the results reflected a company in transition from a national wheat pool business to a diversified agribusiness. But he said the firm needed a change to its constitution to remove a clause that would allow it to remove its A class shares. AWB declared a final dividend of 4c a share, taking the total for the year to 8c. Mr Davis said it was not possible to give any exact guidance on future earnings due to the rapid changes occurring and the election this weekend, which would decide the future of export wheat marketing. The result included its real estate division achieving \$1 billion in sales for the first time, while its Landmark and Rural Services business remain the engine room of the company.

Adelaide.now - Greens give trees to commuters

South Australian Greens Senate candidate Sarah Hanson-Young has handed out free trees to commuters in Adelaide as part of her party's effort to run a carbon positive election campaign. Ms Hanson-Young, who will go close to taking a Senate seat according to the latest opinion polls, said the party was determined to offset more than the carbon emissions the campaign is thought to have generated. The party has engaged the Climate Friendly organisation to calculate the emissions associated with The Greens' federal election campaign. Tree planting organisation Canopy will then offset those emissions by planting trees at Hartley, 60 kilometres south-east of Adelaide. On current estimates, the organisation expects to plant about one third of a hectare of trees to more than cover the 80 tonnes of carbon dioxide produced by Greens candidates in SA. Ms Hanson-Young said handing out free trees to commuters at Adelaide Railway Station was a fun and practical way of reminding voters of the importance of environmental issues and drawing attention to the party's carbon-positive campaign. "Carbon positive means The Greens will go one better than running a carbon-neutral campaign and will actually offset even more than their own carbon emissions," she said. "We hope other parties will follow our lead, offsetting their own emissions and implementing real climate change solutions."

Cate Blanchett's Eco-Renovation

Cate Blanchett's bid to save the planet has come home to roost as she 'greenovates' her \$10 million Sydney mansion. Cate Blanchett's house. Cate, and her playwright husband Andrew Upton, are reportedly forking-out more than \$1.5 million on the renovations, which will transform their Hunters Hill home into an eco-friendly haven for her family. Grey water recycling, a 20,000-litre water tank, solar paneling and energy-saving lights feature in the greenovation, according to a Fairfax publication. While Palm Beach-based Lesiuk Architects, who specialise in environmental jobs, is in charge of the renovation. However, as most renovators know, things can go wrong, and it appears the project has had a couple of setbacks, according to Hunters Hill general manager, Barry Smith. "Like any of these projects – these big projects – they get an approval for a building and say, 'oh hang on it doesn't work', she's had a couple of those," Mr. Smith said, referring to the pool renovation that was awaiting approval. Surprisingly though, while Mr. Smith said they were happy the high-profile Aussie movie star was 'greenovating', he played down the notion that Cate was an eco-pioneer for the prestigious North Shore suburb. Mr. Smith said many residents were environmentally conscious and had renovated their homes to reduce their carbon footprint. The star of Elizabeth: The Golden Age seems to be on a push to eco-overhaul everything she touches; catching eco-friendly taxis at the airport and publicly announcing her eco-political views. And Cate's green thumb is already showing itself at the Sydney Theatre Company, where she takes up appointment as co-artistic director with her husband, in 2008. The pair has confirmed their plans to make the Company "green", with new works set to reflect those at their home. "We intend to initiate discussions with companies with the aim of making the building self-sufficient, to green the building. We are talking solar panels, rainwater, the works," Upton told a press conference. "This would ideally generate enough power to do a whole season off the grid. This would be the first theatre company in the world to do that." Lowering carbon footprint - how can we make a difference? While many of us may think 'greenovating' sounds good in theory, it can be quite expensive, but there are some inexpensive ways to make a difference. Australian of the Year, climate change crusader, Tim Flannery, says we could all make a huge impact and reduce our carbon footprints by just turning of appliances at the power source – rather than leaving electrical appliances on standby. Read our other articles on greening your house and your life in our Green Living section.

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FarmOnline

Investors fear Labor victory on Saturday

A victory by Labor this Saturday will have a negative effect on financial markets according to over 45 per cent of Australian investors surveyed this week. The annual poll by Brisbane-based Market Analyst Software, asked more than 800 Australian traders and investors about how they felt the outcome of the election would affect the

financial markets. Only 5.46pc of those polled thought that a Labor victory would have a positive effect. In contrast, 37pc thought the Coalition would have a positive effect, while only 6.47pc thought the Coalition spelled trouble for the markets. However, many felt the markets operate with little influence from Canberra. The majority of respondents (50.38pc) thought there would be a neutral impact on the markets if the Coalition won, though investors were less confident of a neutral effect with a Labor victory (43.15pc). SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

NEWS.com.au - Wet summer won't help the drought

Australia is facing a wet summer with above-average rain predicted for much of the country, but predictions of an end to the drought are premature. National Climate Centre meteorologist Grant Beard said the outlook was one of the more optimistic the centre had put out in recent years. Sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean off Java and Sumatra that had been abnormally cool in October had now warmed to near normal, Mr Beard said. "Those temperatures are reasonably close to average. They are nowhere near as relatively cool as a few months back," he said. Warm ocean waters produce convection currents that promote rainfall. The latest National Climate Centre three-month outlook, released yesterday, says all of Western Australia can expect average to above-average rainfall. The chances of higher rainfall run to 75per cent in the centre of the state. In eastern NSW and southeastern Queensland, chances of a wetter season run to 70per cent. Only a small patch in southeast South Australia, most of southern and central Victoria and most of Tasmania stand to have a drier and warmer than normal season. But the drought was not about to be broken. "There are so many different issues tied up with the drought," Mr Beard said. University of Southern Queensland professor of climatology and water resources Roger Stone said the chances of the drought breaking soon had increased from 10 per cent to 25 per cent. "It will still take a lot of work to get rid of this drought. The Mitchell grasslands in central inland Queensland needs two big wet summers," he said. Summer might bring intense storms, including hailstorms, which presented a risk to crops such as cotton. "It is that type of year," Professor Stone said. "The coming summer is reasonably positive; it's not quite as high as we'd like but the pattern seems to be heading in the right direction for a change and at long last La Nina has started to gain some traction." The Bureau of Meteorology says a La Nina, associated with good rainfall all across Australia, is now well established. The southern oscillation index, a comparison in air pressure between Darwin and Tahiti, has a 30-day average of 11, another indicator of a return to wetter conditions. In its latest update, the bureau says: "Computer models forecast the La Nina to last at least until the southern autumn of 2008." Dam levels around the country yesterday were 58.2 per cent in Sydney, 20 per cent in southeast Queensland, 40 per cent in Melbourne, 44 per cent in Perth, 91.8 per cent in Hobart and about 75 per cent around Adelaide.

State biodiversity bank opens

Property developers and landowners will soon be able to do a deal with "conservation credits" - paving the way for cheaper housing and giving struggling farmers an income stream. Currently developers aiming to clear environmentally sensitive land can spend years in court. Now an Australia-first State Government project fast-tracks developments while conserving land that is the home for endangered species. The Biobanking scheme - like carbon trading for land - means dairy farmer Edgar Downes can be given credits for his property that has endangered gumtrees and provides habitat for koalas. In turn a developer looking to build on environmentally sensitive land elsewhere in NSW can buy credits, which gives landowners revenue that can then be used to conserve environmentally sensitive sites on a permanent basis. Credits could also be purchased by conservationists - anyone with an interest in ensuring threatened habitat is protected forever, Assistant Environment Minister Verity Firth said. "Money raised by selling credits would go towards the ongoing management and protection of the biobank site, with any left over going into the pockets of the landowner," she said. Mr Downes - whose Camden farm has been with his family for five generations - said being offered the program was like being thrown "a lifeline" after years of drought. "We have been doing it pretty tough. Feed costs are very high and there have been a lot of dairy farms sold for sub-division," he said. "We face the choice now between going broke farming or realising the capital value of the land - that is the beauty of this biodiversity scheme, it gives us a third option." The program has been running as a pilot scheme but is to be rolled out across the state and is expected to bring down the cost of housing. A NSW Urban Taskforce spokesman welcomed the move and said it would make a difference to young families struggling with housing prices. "It has real potential to make developments a lot easier in a lot of places in NSW which means getting more homes on the market which will bring down the cost of housing," he said. But the scheme was not welcomed by conservationists, with Greens MLC Ian Cohen yesterday condemning the plan as a "real estate

scam". "The scheme is geared up for the Government to allow developers to destroy sensitive areas on their development and trade it off with other

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areas," he said. He said endangered species now had a price on their head in order to make room for more homes. "It is all weighted the way of the developers," he said.

Honey, I think I doomed the universe

Astronomers may have unwittingly hastened the end of the Universe by simply looking at it, according to a theory reported in the latest edition of *New Scientist*. The novel idea is being aired by two US physicists, who attack the notion that the universe, believed to have been created in the "Big Bang" some 13.7 billion years ago, will go on, well, forever. In fact, the poor old cosmos is in a rather delicate state, they say. Until recently, a common idea was that the energy unleashed in the Big Bang happened when a "false vacuum" - a bubble of high energy with repulsive gravity - broke down into a safe, zero-energy "ordinary" vacuum. But recent evidence has emerged that places a cosmic question-mark over this cosy thought. For one thing, cosmologists have discovered that the Universe is still expanding. And, they believe, a strange, yet-to-be-detected form of energy called dark energy pervades the universe, which would explain why the sum of all the visible sources of energy fall way short of what should be out there. Dark energy, goes the thinking, is a result of the Big Bang and is accelerating the universe's expansion. If so, the universe is not in a nice, stable zero-vacuum state but simply another "false vacuum" state that may abruptly decay again - and with cataclysmic consequences. The energy shift from the decay would destroy everything in the universe, "wiping the slate clean", says Lawrence Krauss of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. The good news is: the longer the universe survives, the better the chance that it will mature into a stable state. We are just beyond the crucial switching point, Mr Krauss believed. The bad news is: the quantum effect, a truly weird aspect of physics that says whenever we observe or measure something, we reset its clock. Mr Krauss and colleague James Dent pointed to measurements of light from supernovae in 1998 that provided the first evidence of dark energy. These measurements might have reset the decay clock of the "false vacuum" back to zero, back before the switching point and to a time when the risk of catastrophic decay was greater than now, said Mr Dent and Mr Krauss. "Incredible as it seems, our detection of the dark energy may have reduced the life expectancy of the universe," said Mr Krauss. "We may have snatched away the possibility of long-term survival for our universe and made it more likely it will decay." The report says the claim is contested by other astrophysicists and adds reassuringly: "The fact that we are still here means this can't have happened yet."

NEWS.com.au - Methane-eating bacteria could halt warming

New Zealand scientists hope a newly discovered bacterium that eats methane could ultimately help counter a key global warming gas. The bacterium was discovered living about 30cm below the ground in the hot, acidic environment at Hells Gate in Rotorua, a geothermal area. Microbiologist Dr Matthew Stott, who was part of the team that made the discovery, said they had been puzzled as to why methane produced geothermally at Hells Gate did not reach the surface. The answer was a tough methane-consuming bacterium tentatively named *Methylokorus infernorum*. Dr Stott said he hoped the organism could ultimately be used to help landfills and methane-producing factories reduce their emissions. "Potentially it could be used to combat methane emissions," Dr Stott said. He estimated that a cubic metre of liquid containing the bacterium would consume about 11kg of methane each year. Methane is a major contributor to the greenhouse effect. But Dr Stott cautioned that such an application was probably some years into the future. He said it was unlikely the micro-organism, which prefers acidic conditions of about 60C, could ever be added to sheep or cows' food to stop the animals releasing methane.

couriermail.com.au - Drought-breaking rain coming

Southeast Queensland's devastating drought may be coming to an end, forecasters believe. The news comes as Brisbane businesses today face substantial fines if they do not conserve water. Optimism that summer will bring good rains has been prompted by an intensifying La Nina weather pattern and a high Southern Oscillation Index. The weather bureau said the two events suggested that the southeast had up to a 70 per cent chance of an above-average drenching in the next three months. Farmers in the far west, Darling Downs and Maranoa should also benefit, the bureau says. For the rest of the state, the likelihood of above-average rains is 50-50. The bureau said computer modelling indicated that the La Nina - which brings rain, as opposed to an El Nino, which causes prolonged dry conditions - would persist into early next year. Substantial falls are needed soon to boost Brisbane's three dams which yesterday had fallen to 20 per cent of capacity. Wivenhoe and Somerset dams need 350mm, falling at a rate of 5mm an hour - to fill, while North Pine requires 710mm at the same rate. A break in the drought will not affect level 6 restrictions which apply to businesses from today. Queensland Water

Commission chair Elizabeth Nosworthy said the business sector's response to water saving had ranged from excellent to completely unacceptable.

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"It's unfair that while residents are bending over backwards to make world-class water savings, some businesses cannot even be bothered to make a plan to save a single drop," she said. "One in seven businesses have not even filed their mandatory water efficiency management plans which were due on July 31." Firms can be fined up to \$125,000 unless they comply and will face random compliance checks to ensure they cut water use by 25 per cent by next November. Ms Nosworthy said the level 6 measures for business were permanent and could not be avoided, even if the drought broke tomorrow. However, summer conditions would determine if Brisbane's household bucket watering policy needed to be reviewed. The temperature in Brisbane today is expected to reach 26C with some rain forecast in the afternoon while showers will continue over the weekend and into next week.

Adelaide Advertiser - Rudd firm on \$100m for desal

Kevin Rudd has maintained federal Labor's funding pledge of just \$100 million towards a \$1.4 billion desalination plant for Adelaide. Mr Rudd says it could "make the difference" between the project being commercially viable or not. Premier Mike Rann was yesterday forced in State Parliament to defend the relatively small financial contribution from federal Labor. However, he later left open the possibility of requesting more money from a Rudd government once a business plan and location for the desalination plant had been finalised. As reported by The Advertiser on Wednesday, the federal Coalition is likely to pay half of the estimated \$1.4 billion cost of a desalination plant for Adelaide but federal Labor has capped its contribution at just \$100 million. Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull said a "50-50" funding arrangement with the State Government for a desalination plant to ease Adelaide's water crisis was "the starting point". Opposition water spokesman Anthony Albanese ruled out such a deal. Mr Rudd, speaking yesterday morning on Adelaide radio, said if the ALP won government tomorrow it would establish a \$1 billion fund for desalination and recycling projects. "For each recycling or desalination project, we've nominated a \$100 million injection, and often that can make the difference between making a project which might otherwise not be commercially viable into one which is commercially viable because it can adjust the overall rate of return to the investor," he said. Mr Rann has not ruled out building the plant as a public-private partnership. In September he said a desalination plant would be built to supply 25 per cent of Adelaide's fresh water. Mr Rudd yesterday backed the decision to build a desalination plant for the city as "the right way to go to provide a better security for the future for Adelaide people". In Parliament yesterday, Mr Rann said there was a "firm commitment" of \$260 million from federal Labor, which included \$160 million towards a desalination plant in the Upper Spencer Gulf, and \$10 million from the Coalition, for final planning for the Adelaide desalination plant.

Adelaide Advertiser - Production of alumina must remain at home

Australian-made alumina uses just over half the energy and produces less than half of the greenhouse gases as the same product produced in China, Alcoa of Australia managing director Wayne Osborn said this week. But Australian policy makers need to ensure any emission trading regime does not force alumina production overseas, where anti-pollution measures might not be as stringent, or this benefit could be lost, Mr Osborn said. Mr Osborn, who was speaking at the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering's 2007 symposium, said that in 1998, his firm set a target to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent from 1990 levels. "We actually achieved that by 2003," Mr Osborn said. "We've been working on this issue for our operations in Australia." One of the strategies was to partner with Alinta to build co-generation plants at its refineries. "The plants produce electricity and steam from natural gas and represent one of the most efficient uses of fossil fuels in the world," Mr Osborn said. "We save about 450,000 tonnes of greenhouse emissions per year, compared to a conventional coal-fired plant, and that's the equivalent of taking 112,000 cars off the road." Alcoa had also developed a carbon-capture technology which used waste carbon dioxide to treat bauxite residue. "The process locks up large volumes of carbon dioxide while improving the environmental properties of the residue," he said. But climate change was still a large issue for the industry, with benefits gained from Alcoa's efficiencies likely to be eroded by an increase in China's internal production. "We expect aluminium consumption to double between 2005 and 2020. We expect China to be about half that total consumption," Mr Osborn said. "Alumina produced in Australia has less than half the greenhouse footprint of alumina produced in China. As we move into an emissions trading world, as we will here, there actually isn't a way of capturing that value or that environmental benefit overall." Mr Osborn said it was important that any emissions trading regime did not force alumina production offshore. "Perversely, you could have a situation where alumina was preferentially made in China because of an emissions trading regime and global greenhouse emissions actually go up. "These are some of the challenges which scientists should be keeping in front of government as they

make policy decisions." Mr Osborn said Australia's competitiveness had been eroded greatly in the past five years, with construction costs for example, doubling in recent years.

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The Daily Telegraph - Farmers dig deep to beat drought

Drought-stricken farmers are abandoning their harvesters and turning into miners in an effort to save their livelihoods. As NSW slips further into drought, mines are a source of salvation for some of the state's rural communities. Towns like West Wyalong, Gunnedah, Broken Hill and Narrabri - struggling because of the drought - have benefited from local mines, which have boosted their economy and population. It has also given hope to those on the land, like third generation West Wyalong farmers Colin Stokes, Malcolm McNeill and James Rossiter who are the faces of the state-wide revolution. "I never thought I would work in a mine, I thought I would be a farmer until I kicked the bucket," said Malcolm McNeill, who left the farm two years ago to work in maintenance at Cowal Gold Mine, West Wyalong. Mr Stokes, who has been at the mine since February as a plant operator, echoed his sentiments saying it had been six years since he earned an income from the land. "It's a method of survival, the drought has made it so hard that if I had planted this year, I would have been broke," Mr Stokes, a father of five children aged between three and 18 years, said. "I was getting depressed. Not that I would admit it to my wife but I didn't know what to do. "I'm not qualified to do anything but farming and once I made the decision to work in the mines, it felt like a big load was off my shoulder." According to NSW Minerals Council, mining is the state's biggest sector, producing \$11 billion worth of resources a year and employing 46,000 in rural areas. Since the Cowal mine began operations in 2004, Bland Shire Council's 3500 population has been boosted by a further 500 people. Mayor David Bolte, a farmer whose son Roger now drives a water truck at the Cowal mine, said it had injected more than \$20 million into the local economy. He said it been tough for the community after the sausage-casing factory and abattoir closed nearly five years ago. But the opening of the mine together with Pace Farm - which produces one million eggs each day - have lifted residents hopes. New businesses have opened, including West Wyalong's first restaurant.

NEWS.com.au - Labor passes, Coalition fails on climate change, says ACF

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) has rated Labor well ahead of the Coalition on climate change and environment policies. The ACF's final scorecard for the federal election campaign released today gives Labor a pass mark of 60 per cent and a fail to the Coalition with 22 per cent. The Australian Greens took the top score of 95 per cent, followed by the Australian Democrats on 90 per cent. Family First had a mark of 35 per cent. "Labor has pledged to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, has a strong renewable energy target and good policies to encourage energy efficiency, while the Coalition has none of these," ACF executive director Don Henry said. The ACF also backed Labor for rejecting the Coalition's promotion of nuclear power as an option for producing low-emission energy. Both major parties were penalised for not committing to a 2020 target to cut greenhouse pollution. On other issues, the ACF said neither the Coalition nor Labor had shown the strong commitment needed to quickly return the River Murray to health. "Both have expressed support for the Gunns' pulp mill that will entrench the destruction of Tasmania's forests for decades to come," Dr Henry said. The ACF's scorecard was similar to that of the Climate Institute, whose final report card gave Labor 60 per cent to the Coalition's 30 per cent.

ABC News - Climate change emphasis 'hurting short-term efforts'

(Extracts from FarmOnLine article, 23 November 2007) An international climate expert says the emphasis placed on the long-term problems of climate change is confusing people about the short-term impact of pollution. Gavin Fisher is a leading air quality scientist in New Zealand, who recently conducted a four-year study of the immediate health impacts of air pollution. He told a Clean Air Cool Climate Forum in Sydney that many people have become confused about the short-term impacts of fossil fuels on the environment, because of the current scientific focus on climate change. "Climate change, especially since the Al Gore thing, has really taken off big time, and people I think are far more aware and interested in that than local effects," he said. "It can be quite confusing because the two are related in sometimes very confusing ways."

Modelling may save coastal lakes

(Extracts from Science Alert article, 26 October 2007) Coastal lakes form at the mouths of many of Australia's rivers and streams. Increasing pressure on water resources coupled with demand for urban development is beginning to take its toll on these delicate ecosystems. Local councils often find themselves in the difficult position of having to make decisions on development approval based on minimal quantitative information. In an ideal world, it would be possible to fund an extensive research program into every such river system then having gathered data for many years, make appropriate decisions. However, in the real world this is a luxury councils rarely have. However, a group of researchers from the ANU Integrated Catchment Assessment and Management Centre

(iCAM), and the Department of Environment and Climate Change, DECC have developed a modelling approach and software tool that may help change all this. CLAM, the Coastal Lake Assessment and Management tool.

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The CLAM software allows users to enter data into a complex, yet flexible model of the entangled web of interrelated factors that contribute to the health of a particular coastal water system. It can accommodate both hard quantitative data and expert and local knowledge into the same model. This has been central to the success of the system because it allows decision makers to take advantage of the huge body of qualitative knowledge that often exists in local communities. CLAM has multiple levels and multiple functions ranging from easily accessible archiving of local knowledge and research data to extrapolations of various future scenarios. For example, by entering in factors affecting catchment condition such as urbanisation or local vegetation, CLAM can output the likely consequences to all the facets of the water system. 28 CLAMs have so far been developed in collaboration with NSW State Government agencies, local councils, and catchment management authorities. The system has proved so successful that a training and accreditation system has been developed under the auspices of ANU-Enterprise.

Sciencealert.com.au - When 'sea change' meets climate

The Antarctic Climate and Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre Scientists have called for the development of constructive national and international partnerships to underpin an increasingly concerted effort to manage climate change. "As more Australians move to the coast in search of a lifestyle 'sea change', planning for a changing climate, including sea-level rise, is a mainstream issue in need of informed consideration," says CSIRO oceanographer and sea level rise specialist at the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre. "Sea-level rise will have serious consequences during the 21st century and beyond and will impact the lives of tens of millions of people," he says. "In Australia, including the potential impacts of climate change in our dreams of owning our own coastal getaway will be one way to lessen future impacts." Dr Church, and colleagues at CSIRO and the Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems CRC; Dr John Hunter, Dr Neil White and Dr Kathy McInnes, present a review of the current scientific literature in the latest edition of Australasian Science magazine. The authors note that about half of Australia's population lives within seven kilometres of the coast and that as many as 30 per cent (or about six million people) live within 2 km of the coast. Juxtaposed with this rush to the coast is a changing climate. Over the last century, about 70 per cent of the world's sandy shorelines were retreating, between 20-30 per cent were stable, and fewer than 10 per cent were advancing. As sea-levels rise, coastal erosion is expected to continue, resulting in the landward movement of the coastline typically at rates of tens to hundreds of times the rate of sea-level rise. Over the last century, about 70 per cent of the world's sandy shorelines were retreating, between 20-30 per cent were stable, and fewer than 10 per cent were advancing. As sea-levels rise, coastal erosion is expected to continue, resulting in the landward movement of the coastline typically at rates of tens to hundreds of times the rate of sea-level rise. No single coastal flooding event can be blamed on climate change and associated sea-level rise. However, increasing sea levels, potentially reinforced by increases in the number of intense tropical cyclones, as suggested in some recent analyses, means that the risk of major flooding events and loss of life in the future will increase. The authors say there is now a clear consensus among leading climate scientists that the rise in concentrations of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases is a result of human activities and is leading to global warming and other changes in the Earth's climate. Dr Church says Australians are beginning to recognise that climate science is presenting them with outcomes - and suggesting options for adaptation. Appropriate strategies and investment in coastal adaptation, if implemented early enough, can dramatically reduce the potential for economic loss and human tragedy during the 21st century. Strategies include: planning (for example, to ensure escape and emergency routes are available for future flooding events and to increase the resilience of coastal developments and communities); development of set-backs for regions susceptible to flooding and erosion; increased beach renourishment; and protection measures such as sea walls for some coastal locations and retreat or abandonment of others. "One example of an adaptation strategy currently being planned is the investment of billions of pounds to upgrade the Thames Barrier to protect the City of London from sea-level rise and storm surges," Dr Church says. "Adaptation needs to consider not only modern urban development but also allow for the protection of historical sites and sensitive environmental areas and ecosystems. "With appropriate planning we can substantially lessen the impact of 21st century sea-level rise," he says. On time scales of centuries, the authors argue that sea-level rise will be measured in metres unless a significant reduction of greenhouse gases emissions is achieved. "We have options - but there are nations in the Pacific and Asian rim where the only options are internal or external relocation," Dr Church says.

Clouds form over rain-making technology

Rainmaking technology funded by the Australian Government has been given the thumbs down by international scientists, says an adviser to the World Meteorological Organisation.

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Dr Roelof Bruintjes is a cloud physicist at the National Centre for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado. He advises the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) on rainfall enhancement. Dr Bruintjes was commenting on technology soon to be tested in Queensland by the Australian Rain Corporation. He is currently in Australia advising the Queensland Government on cloud seeding. The Sydney-based company, which was recently allocated \$10 million from the Australian Government Water Fund, hopes to use forthcoming trials to show its technology can bring rain. The technology is being tested to see if it can make new rain clouds from blue skies by generating ions in the atmosphere. This is very different from existing rain-making technology, which relies on seeding existing clouds, and has been carried out for decades in Tasmania and the Snowy Mountains. Some Australian experts have already publicly said they are skeptical of the new ionization technology and Dr Bruintjes agrees. "I don't think its money well spent to be honest with you - as far as I'm concerned it's physically not possible," he says. "Nobody can make or chase away a cloud. Nobody can make rain out of nothing."

Making clouds from scratch?

But proponents of the technology say the criticism is unjust. Scientists involved in testing the Australian Rain Corporation technology, including Professor Jürg Keller of the University of Queensland, say the ionisation system uses a ground-based device to attract water molecules. These condense, generating heat that, in turn, triggers an up-draft of the kind that occurs when clouds form naturally. But Dr Bruintjes says WMO experts have already warned against using such ionisation techniques because they are not based on accepted scientific principles. He says while it is possible to ionise atmospheric particles, it is not possible to modify the thermodynamic structure of the atmosphere and so there is no current credible theory to support the idea. He also says evaluations of the technology in the United Arab Emirates and Mexico have shown it is not useful in enhancing rainfall. Dr Bruintjes does not understand why Australia has embraced the technology. "Any country that is in a severe drought is desperate to use any type of technology and maybe this is what has happened in Australia," he said. Queanbeyan-based sustainability consultant Andrew Campbell is a former chief executive officer of Land and Water Australia. He is advising the Australian Rain Corporation on the Queensland trials. He says it is prudent to investigate whether the technology works in Australian conditions, even if scientists do not understand how it works. "From a water policy perspective, the much more important question is whether or not this technology enhances rainfall," he said. "If it does we can analyse the mechanisms at our leisure. If it doesn't then that's a completely academic exercise." Mr. Campbell says he is not aware of any prior evaluation of the technology Australian Rain Corporation will be trailing. But Dr Bruintjes is adamant the technology is the same Russian-developed system that has been promoted over many years by various companies around the world, and which the WMO has warned against.

Competitors?

Mr. Campbell says criticism of the competing ionisation technology is not justified. "It's understandable that people involved in cloud seeding are concerned about a competitive technology," he said. "But until it is properly scientifically evaluated, claims either for or against aren't credible." Dr Bruintjes agrees there is an urgent to investigate rain enhancement technologies but says there are better ways to spend the money. He says one problem is that it is very difficult to determine the success of any rain enhancement technology because of natural variation in rainfall. Dr Bruintjes says it is important to develop a better understanding of how rain forms in clouds, and how technologies with known physical mechanisms can manipulate this. "We need to focus on understanding rather than just going out blindly testing technology we don't understand," he said.

25th

NEWS.com - Brown congratulates Rudd, talks Kyoto

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has personally congratulated Kevin Rudd on Labor's federal election victory and welcomed his plan to quickly ratify the Kyoto protocol. Mr Brown telephoned Mr Rudd from the Ugandan capital of Kampala, where he is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), shortly after outgoing prime minister John Howard conceded defeat last night. "I have talked to Kevin Rudd ... and congratulated him on his election and talked to him about some of the issues, including climate change, that we are discussing here today," Mr Brown told reporters. "Kevin Rudd has told me he will immediately sign the Kyoto agreement and he is proposing these binding agreements in the post-Kyoto talks that

start in Bali in a few days' time." Mr Brown, who heads Britain's Labour Party, also discussed a range of other global issues with Mr Rudd including Iraq, Afghanistan and global security. However, no mention was made on whether Mr Rudd planned to hold any referendum soon on whether Australia should become a republic. "I shall talk to the Australian prime minister in more detail about Iraq," Mr Brown said.

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A spokesman for Mr. Brown said the conversation between the two leaders had been "very cordial and the dynamics were very good". He added that Mr. Brown had enjoyed working with Mr. Howard and he appreciated the close cooperation between the UK and Australia on a number of essential bilateral issues. "He hopes to have an equally warm relationship with the new prime minister," the spokesman said.

Xenophon goes to water

Nick Xenophon may end up sharing the balance of power in the Senate, but he spent today with drought-stricken irrigators in the Riverland. Mr. Xenophon, who quit state politics for a tilt at Federal Parliament, claimed 14.76 per cent of Senate votes in SA. Election to the senate requires a quota of 14.3 per cent of votes. It will be days before the upper house membership is decided, but Labor may need to negotiate with the former state politician, the Greens and the Family First party to pass legislation when the new Senate sits in July next year. Mr. Xenophon, visiting irrigators today, said the Murray River would be his first priority. "I don't start until July the 1st, and whilst I'm not starting for about seven months ... the people of the Riverland only have weeks, not months, before they face certain disaster because of water shortages," he said.

Greens hopes rise for climate action

Environment groups are claiming the victory by Kevin Rudd is a chance to close coal-powered power stations and deliver deep cuts in gas emissions. The groups have also called on the still Coalition-controlled senate not to block ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in the upper house. Twenty-one of the estimated 24 seats won by Labor on Saturday were decided by Green preferences, the activist said. Greenpeace head of campaigns, Steve Campbell, said climate change had been a key election issue but Labor's commitment, while better than Coalition was still not enough. "While the climate change policies the ALP took to the election were significantly better than those of the Coalition, they are still nowhere near good enough. Emissions will continue to skyrocket unless Prime Minister Rudd starts phasing out coal-fired power stations and replacing them with renewable energy. "Ratifying Kyoto is a good first step. But the key indicator of the new government's success will be if emissions begin to decrease during this term. "Quitting coal is the basis for meeting Australia's global responsibilities to cut emissions and this will require visionary policies from the new government, early on in its first term." Mr Rudd has promised to ratify the Kyoto Protocol – an action which will have to wait until parliament returns next year – and to attend next month United Nation's sponsored talks on the 2012 Post-Kyoto arrangements. Labor has set a broad target of 60 per cent reduction of Australian emissions by 2050 and is waiting on a report from academic Ross Garnaut – now almost certainly to be supplemented by Treasury's work already under way – on what the short term targets should look like. Australian Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry said the result and the importance of green preferences showed the need for decisive action. "Australians have voted for fair dinkum action on climate change and are looking forward to Mr Rudd moving immediately to ratify Kyoto and develop a strong target to cut greenhouse pollution by 2020. "We would also urge the Coalition to give bipartisan support to Kyoto ratification. It is time for Australia to become a leader and not a laggard on this crucial issue." **Whilst I congratulate the Labor party on there election win I have serious concerns for the the bush, the Murray-Darling Basin, drought assistance and 'climate change' under a Labor Government. Labor Governments over many years, as it has been shown, have not been supportive of the bush, I hope I am wrong and will be glad to apologise if I am proven to be wrong!**

26th

FarmOnLine

Rudd gets early start on climate change

Kevin Rudd has immediately begun preparations to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and attend next month's climate change summit in Bali. Labor's election victory was welcomed internationally as a shot in the arm for global greenhouse talks. Mr. Rudd said he would be discussing with the Prime Minister's department the administrative steps required to ratify Kyoto. Indonesian President, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, in a call to Mr. Rudd after his election victory, formally invited him to the Bali meeting under the UN framework which will negotiate a post-Kyoto climate change treaty. Indonesian presidential spokesman Dino Djalal said the new Australian leader's presence, and the ratification of Kyoto, would be symbolically significant and "add greater momentum" to the work of the conference. British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, who also spoke to Mr. Rudd, said ratifying Kyoto would mark a significant shift in Australia's attitude to tackling climate change. "His commitment to a

post-Kyoto agreement, and what he wants to do about a binding commitment, will be a very important factor in the next stage of the Bali talks," Mr. Brown told reporters in Kampala at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Despite Labor's election win, Australia formally opposed a push at CHOGM to get the Commonwealth's 53 member states, which represent one-third of the world's population, to adopt there

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own set of binding targets. Mr. Rudd also spoke to US President George W Bush, but did not reveal if they discussed his plans to break ranks on Kyoto with the United States, making it the last developed nation not to ratify. Greenpeace said Mr. Rudd's victory was great news for the accord. "It's a very important event in the international climate debate, and for Bali. It will leave Bush and the United States more isolated," Greenpeace political director Shane Rattenburg told AFP. Ratifying Kyoto would require Australia to keep emissions at 108pc of 1990 levels in the 2008-12 commitment period, a target the outgoing coalition government said it was on track to meet. Mr. Rudd will go to Bali already committed to a target of cutting Australia's carbon emissions by 60pc by 2050. He has postponed setting shorter-term targets until receiving a report next year. Climate Institute chief executive, John Connor, said Mr. Rudd's attendance in Bali would be a key driver to cutting the nation's greenhouse gases. Mr. Connor said exit polls showed the environment and climate change was the third top issue that affected people's vote. "The key message is that Kevin Rudd has a mandate and a responsibility, but we believe the clear intent is to show leadership on climate change and cutting Australia's greenhouse pollution." The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) said people had voted for action on climate change, citing the 21 out of 24 new Labor seats decided on Australian Greens' preferences. "We would also urge the coalition to give bipartisan support to Kyoto ratification," ACF executive director Don Henry said.

SA levy supports projects for Murray's long-term health

SA Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald says nearly \$16 million from the Save the River Murray Fund has been spent during 2006-07, on a comprehensive range of projects to restore the health of the river. Ms Maywald, who tabled the Save the River Murray Fund annual report in the SA Parliament this week, listed a number of key achievements made in improving the River Murray's health; using taxpayers' levy money during 2006-07.

She says, the fund is vital to support projects in three priority areas:

- Improving environmental health of the river system.
- Maintaining acceptable water quality for irrigation in South Australia.
- Improving water quality for urban water supplies.

The Minister says "South Australia has now recovered about 15 gigalitres towards its 35 gigalitres target for the Living Murray Initiative First Step of returning 500 gigalitres to the river by 2009."

The Minister says \$21 million was raised during 2006-07 and \$16 million was spent on works and measures under the River Murray Improvement Program. "At the end of June 2007, there was \$12.5m in the fund," she says. "Of this, \$10.5m is committed to water recovery projects under The Living Murray Initiative and the other \$2m is allocated to projects that are coming online this year. "While the current drought and low flows are causing significant problems in managing the river, all South Australians can be proud of the worthwhile and long-lasting contribution they are making toward restoring the river's health. "The fund is an important initiative in strategic planning for the future of the Murray, and once the river begins to recover from the widespread drought in the Murray-Darling Basin, we will see more and more benefits of this prudent planning and management." * The report will be available online at: www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au SOURCE: Breaking news from the *Stock Journal*, SA.

The Australian – Hope to Bridge Murray Impasse

There is renewed hope for a National approach to solving the impasse between Victoria and the Commonwealth over the parched Murray-Darling Basin after labor's election win. A Rudd government will sit down with the State Labor Government to discuss its problems with the \$10 billion water plan announced by John Howard in January. It is unclear who will represent the commonwealth in the key water portfolio, with Kevin Rudd promising only to keep Julia Gillard, Wayne Swan and Lindsay Tanner in their present roles. Water experts yesterday were quietly optimistic the two Labor governments would have serious talks about the future of the plan with the election out of the way. "There is goodwill everywhere. The question is whether they are smart enough to do it," one insider said. Labor plans to bring forward \$400 million in funding under the \$10 billion plan in a bid to achieve water savings more quickly. The lack of water in the basin will provide focused attention, as could the presence in the Senate from July of South Australian independent Nick Xenophon, who said the Murray River would be his first priority. He could share the balance of power with the Greens. Labor's plan to streamline the federal water bureaucracy has public servants on edge. The National Water Commission,

the Murray Darling Basin Commission, the Department of Environment and Water, and the planned Murray-Darling Basin Authority are to be reformed.

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Greens call for Garrett to step down

Peter Garrett should not be environment minister if the Rudd Labor government is serious about elevating climate change and water policy as core economic issues, the Greens said yesterday. Prime minister-elect Kevin Rudd yesterday again refused to back his environment spokesman, fuelling speculation that the former rock star may be moved out of the portfolio when the new front bench is announced later this week. Senior Labor sources say Mr. Garrett's lack of experience and factional support within Labor may work against him holding on to the environment portfolio, now regarded as one of the toughest and most important jobs in the cabinet. Greens climate spokeswoman Christine Milne said if Mr. Rudd was serious about uniting economics with environmental policy he would need to appoint a senior member of his leadership team to the job "Peter Garret is not that person," Senator Milne told *The Australian*. "He is still peripheral in the labor Party, he's seen as a lightweight in the Labor Party, he's seen as a public relations coup for Labor, but he's certainly not seen as anyone with power or influence in the leadership team. If Kevin Rudd does it will be a signal to the Greens that climate change is a public relations exercise for the Labor Party, not core business." Mr. Rudd yesterday declined to confirm his environment spokesman would be retained in the job, although he did praise Mr. Garrett's performance despite two highly publicized gaffes during the campaign. "Peter performed very well during the campaign and, unlike his opponent, demonstrated our continuing strong credentials on climate change as opposed to a government which up until now has shown itself to be climate change skeptics," Mr. Rudd said. A spokesman for Mr. Garrett said yesterday he would not make any public comment on his role in the Labor government. Mr. Rudd discussed climate change when he spoke with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown yesterday. He also met with bureaucrats yesterday to begin the process of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. He was also formally invited by Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to attend UN climate change negotiations in Bali next month, although Australia may not officially be a ratified signatory of Kyoto until March next year. While Mr. Rudd can lodge ratification documents once his government has been sworn in under Article 25 of the Kyoto Protocol it will take a further 90 days before the treaty officially comes into force.

ABC - Iemma looks to cooperative federalism

New South Wales Premier Morris Iemma says the election of a federal Labor Government will offer a rare opportunity for greater co-operation between the Commonwealth and the states. Mr. Iemma says the states will benefit from Kevin Rudd's plans to increase skills training and restore commonwealth investment in the health system. He says New South Wales voters have emphatically rejected the Workchoices legislation and that the Liberal Party has failed to understand the financial pressures families face.

The AGE - Treedom fighter goes for his gum to save its life

The most imposing river red gum on Gunbower Island is, at best guess, 800 years old. Known as the eagle tree, it was once about four metres wide and probably 45 metres high. Like 70% of the red gums on the Victorian side of the Murray River, it has seen better days. It is about 10 metres shorter, its canopy wilted and many of its branches, including two where eagles nested, lost in windstorms. It is old and dying of thirst. Starting later this week, it is getting a temporary but substantial reprieve as Paul Haw, a nursery owner and environmental campaigner, starts a personal regeneration project using 1 million litres of his own water. It will cost him \$70 for the paperwork, and about \$1200 that he has sacrificed by not selling it to fruit farmers near Shepparton. "Look, I'm donating it to an old red gum instead of a few buckets of peaches," says Mr. Haw, of Yando, south of Swan Hill. "We'll keep the icon tree going this summer, and then we'll wait for next winter and what the next government decision brings." Water will be drip fed around the tree, about five kilometres from Koondrook, from a tanker over about three weeks, and locked in by sandbags provided by the State Emergency Service. Along with Koondrook's Baptist pastor, Geoff Leslie, Mr. Haw hopes it may trigger a greater understanding of what is being lost across the north of the state. Two new reports highlighted in *The Age* earlier this month, one partly funded by the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, paint a dire picture of the health of the Murray. Red gums are deteriorating and dying, interrupting the nutrient cycle between the river and floodplain. Before the Murray was dammed, the Gunbower region flooded up to seven years out of every 10, but there has not been regular flooding since 1995. Environmentalists say the reports highlight the lack of political will to return water to Australia's greatest waterway. Mr. Leslie, who has been taking people to see the tree for years, has never seen it in as bad shape as it is now, but says he is unsure what can be done to counter the

drought. "I am a big supporter of the red gum forest, but I am also very supportive of the industry that uses the river," he says. Premier John Brumby has already rejected draft recommendations from the Victorian Environment Assessment Council to flood the Murray with billions of litres of water, but says the Government will ensure a "balanced outcome" once the final report is released.

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State Government spokeswoman Stacy Hume says rescue programs have helped red gums at stressed sites along the river but adds: "It would require sustained rain and major flooding to address the red gum issue properly after 11 years of crippling drought."

River Red Gum: the facts

- The most widely distributed eucalypt, particularly prevalent along mainland waterways.
- Can live for more than 500 years, in rare cases reaching 1000.
- Usually grows to about 30 metres, but can top 45.
- Hollows are home to water and forest birds, including regent parrots.
- Relies on river flooding to survive in semi-arid areas.

SOURCE: CSIRO

The Australian - Smoke shrouds green scheme

Picture this: a government so arrogant, so hubris-bloated that it is prepared to wipe out a million hectares of virgin rainforest to plant rice, despite warnings from scientists that, apart from the grave ecological damage, less than 30 per cent of the area is even suitable for growing the staple crop. Such a monumental act of stupidity and greed indeed happened in southern Central Kalimantan. The project was the brainchild of pride-filled dictator Suharto, desperate in the mid-1990s to reverse Indonesia's rice deficit that required imports and ready to go to any lengths suggested by cronies and rapacious family members to do it. Not a single crop was reaped from what was known as the mega-rice project: at least none that would suffice for an evening meal. Plenty of valuable timber ended up as pure profit in the pockets of Jakarta's super-wealthy, however, as the rainforests that once soaked up carbon dioxide were stripped of their bounty, mostly for overseas sale. Now supporters of the post-Suharto reformasi administration, including Australia, are scrambling to allocate money to redress the fiasco and get some climate-change runs on the board, but grave questions remain over how much of the damage can be undone. By digging more than 4600km of channels connecting two large rivers that flowed into the Java Sea to the south of Central Kalimantan province and draining the peat-rich rainforest swamp on which the region's delicate ecosystem relied, Suharto's engineers created a catastrophe that scientists say could take several generations to reverse. "At least 50 years in the least affected areas and hundreds of years in most of it," explains agronomist Suwido Limin. "The hydrographic situation here was changed completely and the peat became extremely sensitive to fire." The project's aims, in a misguided attempt to produce a wet-rice cultivation system on cleared peatland, ignored the fact the rivers are lower than the rainforest water table, which rises and falls according to the monsoonal cycle. For wet irrigation, the water source needs to be at least as high as the paddy fields. The new canal system, although designed as an irrigation network for the entire area that could flood paddy fields during crop growth and drain them at harvest time, flows only in one direction: out to sea. It is impossible to re-flood the areas intended to host the rice crops at planting time. The peat - dense layers of partly decomposed vegetation, several metres deep - dried out and left the area useless for agriculture. Further, the project's other main intended effect - easing land shortage in Java, Madura and Sulawesi by offering agricultural space to thousands of people from those islands - failed completely, along with the harvest. The new arrivals then put greater pressure on existing food and other resources. The only effective way to re-establish the peat, where that is possible at all, is to replant the land with appropriate rainforest species and to dam the canal network to isolate the forests once more from tidal fluctuation. That's a project being championed by Suwido, Indonesia's foremost expert on peatland biodiversity who runs an international centre for peatland preservation at the University of Palangkaraya in Central Kalimantan's capital city. It's significant that Suwido is a Dayak, the region's dominant ethnic group, which has historically had deep links to the land. Indonesia's 90 million hectares of forests, which because of their ability to absorb CO₂ play such a crucial role in the fight against global warming, are owned by the Government. It awards concessions to logging companies and plantation corporations, in particular those seeking to enter the lucrative palm oil market. Groups such as the Dayaks in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo, are legally recognised as having stewardship over their traditional lands, which they typically harvest in sustainable fashion for a range of crops including coffee, rubber, rattan and various timbers. Now in many areas they are fighting back against the forest-clearing that, although it has been going on for decades, took off with the launch of Suharto's scheme in 1995 and has more recently hit warp speed with the palm oil boom, part of the race to produce viable biofuels. These fuels are supposed to reduce

dependence on fossil equivalents and thus tackle global warming head-on; but, ironically, the consensus is that Indonesia's ravaged peatlands and their consequent wildfires have made it the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases, after the US and China. A UN report this year suggested that, at present rates, 98 per cent of the country's rainforest will be destroyed within 15 years.

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The possible extinction of fauna such as orang-utans and tigers is part of the price likely to be paid for global warming. Alarmed at the prospect, some prominent Kalimantan figures, such as Dayak leader Stone Christopel Sahabu from Cempaga village, several hours north of Palangkaraya, have organised community resistance camps deep in what remains of their forests, armed with traditional weapons and prepared to repel bulldozers and oil palm plantation bosses. "We'll do this until the end, until we get proper title to the land. Guarding the forests was our responsibility from the beginning," Stone warns from his comfortable village home, where he is helping his wife recover from an infected foot injury and his grandson from a bout of malaria. "The forest is just as much my home as this is." An official government document gives the lithe and strong 74-year-old authority to take care of - but not ownership of - the nearby 10,000ha he has helped preside through for decades. It took just one week last year for excavators to turn 6000ha of that land into a oil palm plantation, he says. Now he's trying to work out how to fight the invasion in the courts. Activists such as Suwido and Stone could prove to be powerful allies for Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who has hitched his car to the environmental train, the next station being the UN climate change conference in Bali starting on December 3. At that meeting a successor to the Kyoto Protocol will begin to take shape. Indonesia, with vast natural resources but also expansive power needs, wants to be in for the ride. Australia does too, even though the crucial matter of developing nations signing up to binding targets is likely to derail significant progress, at least in the short term. In March, Yudhoyono decreed that Central Kalimantan's devastated peatlands be "rehabilitated and revitalised". The wreckage of the mega-rice project - halted by Suharto's successor B.J. Habibie in 1998 - had contributed several times already to the terrible forest fires that covered Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia in thick smoke during subsequent dry seasons and almost caused diplomatic breakdowns between Jakarta and its northern neighbours. The fires still burn during the midyear dry. They are especially rapacious because the metres-deep biomass becomes easily combustible once it dries out and the blazes are all but impossible to extinguish. Only in the wet season, when heavy downpours can continue for hours on end, are fires really smothered. During the worst dry spells, the rich humus smoulders for months, reigniting spontaneously in the fierce heat and producing a pall thick enough to shut down airports and reduce visibility to a few metres. Yudhoyono knows that tackling his country's rampant deforestation problem is the only way to gain international credibility on the environment, but he also has picked a contentious way of going about it, by joining the so-called Forest Eight group of nations - Brazil, Cameroon, Congo, Costa Rica, Gabon, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea - which want money for agreeing not to cut down certain parts of their rainforests. The concept is called avoided deforestation and it's based on the idea that these developing countries suffer a greater economic loss by keeping forest areas than by mining their wealth and turning the land over to plantations, mines and other industry. Part of the deal will be a post-Kyoto agreement that brings rainforest-based greenhouse gas emission net cuts into the international carbon-trading regime. And all of that is precisely where Yudhoyono's project to regenerate the dead peatlands of Central Kalimantan - and Australia's enthusiastic embrace of the plan - comes in. Scientists believe peat in its natural state - centuries-old, partly decomposed organic matter deep in swampy forests - absorbs carbon dioxide, like trees. When the peat dries and burns, the dense smoke is accompanied by vast amounts of the stored carbon. Tackling that problem - or appearing to be doing so - adds clout on the climate change circuit. Indonesian scientist Alue Dohong, of Wetlands International, stresses that peatland rehabilitation is not just an Indonesian problem "but a global one because even without the fires these dried-out peatlands are releasing 50 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year into the atmosphere". The Australian Government's \$30 million contribution to a projected \$100 million government-industry Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership, to which BHP Billiton has signed up, aims to reforest, reflood and preserve peatland on the Indonesian part of huge Borneo island. Exactly how is not clear: even government officials admit the scheme's detail is still being ironed out and applications closed last week for a Jakarta-based project administrator, who will take up the post in February. However, if the project follows any of the methods of previous Indonesian government rehabilitation efforts, Suwido says, it will almost certainly be a complete waste of money, apart from the image boost for firms such as BHP Billiton, a huge miner in Kalimantan and across the region, as a result of their role in an ostensibly green scheme. "I don't want a developed nation like Australia to spend all that money for nothing," the scientist explains, gesturing at maps in his office showing the destroyed region. "But if it's anything like what's happened in the past, then I'm really not certain all the money won't just go straight into

officials' pockets." Suwido's main criticism is of projects that aim to plant a given number of trees but include no mechanism for measuring their survival rate. "The Government plants trees, the people look at them and say, 'That's nice', and the trees die," he says, almost furious in his dismay at the lack of accountability still evident in Indonesia. "Then they measure the success of their project by how many trees they have handed out.

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But how many of those trees have done anything? They say, 'We've replanted so many hectares', but there might in the end be only one tree still living on each of those hectares." The approach also takes no account of the porous system of oversight on logging and plantation concessions in Indonesia, notoriously rife with corruption and ripe for abuse. Even the country's dwindling national parks are not safe from the greased palms of officials eager for a little extra. Ever the campaigner, Suwido and his small university centre's staff of 10 have been running a pilot project where villagers in degraded mega-rice districts near Palangkaraya are given a variety of selected trees - a native species of melaleuca, say, which produces a fast-growing timber suitable for building houses - then paid a small amount of money each quarter for every one that remains alive. If the tree dies, they get nothing. Monitoring the results is labour intensive but economically far more efficient than the Government's schemes as they exist, Suwido argues. "The people feel like they are actually responsible for the trees, which is how they treated the forests before they were wiped out. But the Government (says it's) not interested, because (it's) already rehabilitated two million hectares. Well, show me how many trees are on those two million hectares." Suryadi, a woman from the small village of Kalampangan where the pilot project is focused, says it is working better than she expected, enabling her to "plant vegetables, especially green beans, although it's not so good when it floods" (a result of the canal drainage system). Suwido staff member Sahara Alim, one of the workers who helps monitor the several-hectare trial plots cared for by villagers such as Suryadi, is as vehement as his boss in support of the idea, taking Inquirer into the field to demonstrate the project at work. "Look, mega-rice was never really about rice anyway," he says. "It was about looting the timber. And, frankly, palm oil is not much better. But this way people at least get to feel they have their land back. The local government does site surveys and rehabilitation projects in areas where they know there will be no scrutiny. They don't plant anything, they don't do anything. "The people are sick of this fake rehabilitation, sick of being lied to."

Adelaide Now - Mr X wants Murray Basin action

Australia's new independent senator-elect Nick Xenophon says he is determined to use his power in the Senate to bring water back into South Australia's Riverland. Mr Xenophon claimed 14.76 per cent of Senate votes in South Australia, meaning he will take up the state's third seat in the Senate from next July, possibly set to share the Senate's balance of power. He spent yesterday visiting South Australia's Murray River growers and today said getting water back into the Riverland system was an "absolute priority". "The most critical issue facing South Australia at the moment is water," Mr Xenophon told Southern Cross Broadcasting. "The Murray River irrigators are in dire straits and it's important that we have a national water plan to ensure that those along the Murray River can survive and that's one thing I'm working very hard on. "The first thing I did after I got elected was to go up to the Riverland yesterday to meet with growers, to meet with the local community and that's an absolute priority." He said there were billions of dollars of plantings at stake in the Riverlands and it was in the national interest to help the growers. Mr Xenophon quit a 10-year career as a South Australian upper house member to run for the Senate, campaigning on anti-gambling and water security issues.

AWA

*The incoming Labor Government Water Policy promises to invest an additional \$1.5 billion in water reforms and will bring forward \$400 million under the \$10 billion National Plan for Water Security to fast-track improvements in water efficiency, significantly invest in key water infrastructure projects and address over-allocation.

*The new Water Minister is expected to be Anthony Albanese, who held the Shadow Portfolio for water prior to 24 November.

*Newly elected PM Kevin Rudd has immediately begun preparations to ratify the KYOTO Protocol and attend next month's climate change summit in Bali.

*Documents from the Barwon Water Biosolids Management Project, which seeks to develop a sustainable programme for the treatment and beneficial use of Biosolids from the Black Rock Sewage Treatment Plant and Barwon Water's other water reclamation plants have just been uploaded to the website.

*Six energy companies have been short-listed to tender for the renewable energy contract to power Sydney's desalination plant to be fully powered by Wind. Sydney Water will purchase 100% accredited, clean, green energy from the market to run the plant.

*Individuals and groups wishing to learn key findings and comment on recommendations from the National Biosolids Research Program are advised of upcoming Workshops.

*WA State Government has raised the standard for water efficiency ratings on washing machines to be eligible for the highly-successful Waterwise Rebate Program. Only 4.5 star or higher water efficiency rated washing machines will qualify for a \$150 rebate (currently 4 star or higher).

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*Companies that have contributed to pollution elimination or reduced freshwater consumption through innovative programs, policies, processes or products now have the opportunity to be nominated for the prestigious 2008 Stockholm Industry Water Award.

*The Australian Water Association is currently preparing the 2008 edition of the Australian Water Directory, the industry's handbook of information and suppliers within the water sector. The 2008 edition will be published early next year.

*The Environmental Biotechnology CRC (EBCRC) and ARC Centre of Excellence for Free Radical Chemistry and Biochemistry (Free Radical Centre) have signed a MOU that will see them work together to improve technology that initiates BIOFILM formation and dispersal with potential applications across many industries from wastewater to the health sector.

*EPA Victoria is drafting guidelines for the use of biosolids as Geotechnical Fill. EPA will provide an overview of the new guidelines at an industry forum on 13th December 2007 and seeks early feedback prior to the release of draft guidelines for comment over the coming months.

*Earth Tech has begun work with SA Water on a USD\$4.2 million (A\$4.7 million) extension of the Virginia Pipeline to deliver an additional three billion litres a year of Class A recycled water to the Angle Vale area in the Northern Adelaide Plains.

*The SEQ Urban Water Security Research Alliance, a \$50m partnership between the Queensland Government, CSIRO, University of Queensland and Griffith University, has been signed. Over five years it will address many key urban water issues including: climate change; capacity building; loss management; advanced treatment; reuse and social engagement.

*The Project Alliance for Queensland's Western Corridor Recycled Water pipeline (which includes Transfield Services and Sunwater) has completed the eastern section and is now delivering water ahead of schedule.

*Energy Recovery, Inc. (ERI(r)), producer of ultra-high-efficiency energy recovery technology for reverse osmosis (RO) desalination is working on the 55,000 m³/day desalination plant located near Swakopmund, Namibia. The new Uramin desalination plant will supply water for the Trekkopje Uranium project and increase the water supply to the parched region.

*Goldenfields Water has selected MUNSYS from Open Spatial Australia to better manage its water assets.

*Outgoing environment minister, Liberal leadership candidate and former Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull says the Coalition's failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol was one of the reasons it took a thumping at Saturday's federal election.

*Activists opposing plans to pipe water from parched rural centres to Melbourne's suburbs are advocating disrupting train and water services to the state capital as the issue becomes bitter.

*International leaders have already been told by PM elect Rudd that he will ratify Kyoto within weeks.

27th

FarmOnLine

Chances still good for wet and cool summer, but not in Vic

The odds are promising that most of rural Australia can expect a reprieve from the drought this summer, with cool and wet conditions forecast for all States except Victoria. According to the Bureau of Meteorology's latest temperature and rainfall forecasts for December to February, a large swathe of southern Queensland and the eastern half of NSW has better than a 55pc chance of above average rainfall. And almost all of Western Australia has between a 55pc and 70pc chance of above average rainfall. For South Australia, Central Australia and northern and western Queensland, the odds are a solid 50pc, but for Victoria the chances slip to 45pc in the southwest corner. The prospects for maximum temperatures follows a very similar pattern, with Victoria and the NSW Riverina having a 65-70pc chance of higher than average daytime temperatures. But in northern NSW and southern Queensland those odds fall to just 35-40pc. Interestingly the chances of exceeding the median minimum temperatures is highest in WA, where most of the State has a 75-80pc chance of higher than normal night-time temperatures. The Bureau says the temperature and rainfall patterns in southern Australia are largely due to continuing higher than average temperatures over parts of the tropical and sub-tropical Indian Ocean.

The La Niña pattern of cooler than average temperatures in the central to eastern equatorial Pacific has contributed to the increased chances of cooler and wetter weather in southern Queensland and northern NSW. SOURCE: Bureau of Meteorology and *FarmOnline*, providing up to the minute weather forecasts.

Farm groups want Rudd's rural vision

Newly elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has been welcomed by the farm lobby, but also challenged to deliver on a vision for agriculture and rural communities.

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VFF president Simon Ramsay says the election result is an opportunity for agriculture to move forward with the new government. "The result is an opportunity for Australian agriculture to move forward, and call on Kevin Rudd to make brave decisions to cement the future of our industry," Mr. Ramsay said. "Over the course of the campaign the farm lobby consistently called on all major political parties to commit to outlining a plan for the future of the Australian agricultural sector. "Whilst both sides committed to comparatively minor spending on agriculture, neither party presented a long-term vision. "Kevin Rudd's clear mandate presents him with the opportunity to work with the farm lobby to develop a plan for our future." NSW Farmers' Association president Jock Laurie says he will continue to work with the National Farmers' Federation to put forward to the Rudd Government the issues of importance to farmers and regional communities. Mr. Laurie said rural communities need positive outcomes on issues affecting drought assistance, telecommunications, quarantine, climate change, water, wheat's single desk, FarmBis and industrial relations. With drought still hitting hard, farmers are also extremely concerned about the future of the economy and its impact on their markets.

The Australian - Tory treasurer says signing protocol is purely symbolic

The Kyoto Protocol is "dead and buried" and Australia's impending ratification under a new Rudd government is nothing more than symbolism. Former British chancellor of the exchequer Nigel Lawson made the claim as he warned that China and India would not sign a new global deal to reduce greenhouse emissions for at least a decade, despite engaging in negotiations such as next week's UN meeting in Bali. Kevin Rudd pledged during the election campaign that one of his first acts as prime minister would be to sign the Kyoto Protocol - a move John Howard refused to make because the pact did not commit developing countries to emissions-reduction targets. But Lord Lawson said the Labor leader's plan was just symbolic. "Despite the posturing of politicians throughout much of the world, despite the declarations that global warming is the greatest threat facing the planet, despite Kyoto, and despite innumerable international gatherings of the great and the good, little in practice has been done and global carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise," he said. Lord Lawson was speaking at a lunch for the Institute of Public Affairs in Sydney yesterday. He said the world's fast-growing developing countries had already signalled they would not cut greenhouse gases if it impeded their economic growth. He said that China and India had already made it clear that they intended to continue utilising cheap fossil fuels. "Of course they will be happy to go on talking, to appear reasonable and so on, but an agreement will difficult to nail down in the foreseeable future." Lord Lawson was chancellor in the Thatcher government and a key member of the House of Lords Report into the Economics of Climate Change, which found the cost of action to reduce emissions would exceed the economic cost of global warming.

Turnbull tapped mat on Kyoto: Rudd

Prime Minister-elect Kevin Rudd has dismissed outgoing environment minister Malcolm Turnbull's support for the Kyoto Protocol, saying he should have argued harder to change the Howard Government's stance. Mr. Turnbull, who was tossed out of his frontbench office on Saturday night, says voters have given Mr Rudd a mandate to ratify Kyoto and says it will be an important symbolic act in addressing climate change. Mr. Rudd expects to have legal advice by Thursday on whether he can ratify Kyoto before next week's UN climate change meeting in Bali. But he was unimpressed with Mr Turnbull's sudden public support for the treaty, which commits nations to specific greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. The Howard Government signed the protocol but then refused to ratify it. "The thing for Mr Turnbull, I suppose, to answer is why the government he's been part of for so long refused to do so," Mr Rudd said to Southern Cross Broadcasting. "If it was such a matter of high principle I would have thought (he would have) made it plainer publicly at the time, rather than to have simply tapped the mat with the Prime Minister and others who didn't want to proceed in that direction." Mr Rudd took a call from former US vice president and environmental campaigner Al Gore today, congratulating him on his stunning election win. The two men will catch up in Bali at the UN meeting, where work will begin on a new treaty to replace Kyoto. As many as three ministers are expected to accompany Mr Rudd – the trade minister, environment minister and treasurer. But it is not clear yet who will fill those positions, with only incoming Treasurer Wayne Swan guaranteed of keeping his portfolio. Mr Rudd is finalising his ministry and will unveil it to a meeting of the Labor caucus in Canberra on Thursday – two hours before the

Liberals meet to elect a new opposition leadership team. Labor's environment spokesman Peter Garrett is rumoured to be switching to indigenous affairs and the arts, while it's also unclear whether former leader Simon Crean will keep the trade role. Most frontbenchers are still waiting to hear from Mr Rudd as they prepare to arrive in Canberra tomorrow afternoon for a series of faction meetings before Thursday's caucus gathering. Incoming MPs Greg Combet, Bill Shorten and Maxine McKew have all been touted as potential frontbenchers.

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But Mr Rudd has all but ruled out an instant ministry for Ms McKew, who appears to have beaten Prime Minister John Howard in his seat of Bennelong. "She's a great person, with great ability," he said. "And I do believe generally as a general principle that people coming into the parliament need a bit of parliamentary experience first. "It's a strange old institution, the Parliament, you've got to get accustomed to it. "But I'm really confident she's going to make a big contribution in the future." Mr Rudd also ruled out watering down his planned changes to the unpopular Work Choices laws to ensure its passage through a Coalition-controlled Senate. Liberal Senate leader Nick Minchin has signalled the Coalition will vote against any changes. Mr Rudd said the Coalition "hadn't got the message" from Saturday's result.

Adelaide.now - SA Water restrictions to stay in December

Water restrictions for domestic users in Adelaide will remain in force in December, the State Government said today. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said with the drought continuing in the Murray-Darling Basin, in-flows to Adelaide Hills reservoirs remained low at just 18 per cent of the five-year average. But she said Adelaide residents were to be commended for their water-saving efforts, which meant tighter restrictions were not yet required. Under the current restrictions gardens can be watered with drippers or hand-held hoses with a trigger nozzle for three hours, one day each week. Homes with even numbers can water on Saturdays, with odd numbers on Sundays. Watering cans and buckets can be used at any time but sprinklers continue to be banned. "Restrictions will continue to be monitored on a monthly basis and it is anticipated enhanced level three restrictions will be maintained through summer, provided there are no spikes in consumption," Ms Maywald said.

28th

FarmOnLine

More good rain in NSW, Qld

Good follow-up rains have fallen early this week over a wide area of southern Queensland and many parts of NSW, with more expected. The good rain, although too late for winter crops, will lift hopes for good summer crops and a good start to the northern pastoral industries. Queensland cattlemen are hoping the falls indicate the re-emergence of a 'normal' season, with the timing just right for this summer rainfall zone, as the season moves from late spring into summer this week. Good rain of more than 50mm has fallen at Injune, Tambo and Charleville. The latest rain comes only a week after the last widespread falls. In the attached Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) map, blue-green and blue indicate 50-150mm, green 25-50mm, light green 15-25mm, yellow 10-15mm, for the week to 9am Tuesday. The falls add substance to the BOM's latest optimistic rainfall forecasts for December to February and is also in line with the sharply rising southern oscillation index (SOI). SOURCE: *FarmOnline* and Bureau of Meteorology.

Rural Aust to pay most for climate change

A study of the costs of climate change has found rural communities will pay almost twice as much as city dwellers for the effects of environmental degradation. Drought-affected rural communities are among those to bear the biggest brunt of an estimated annual \$17 billion bill for climate change in Australia. The average weekly cost to rural households will be \$60, compared with \$32 for city families, according to the study by consultant, National Economics for the Australian Local Government Association. Among the hardest hit will be outback Queensland and NSW and the diverse rural and industrial area of southwest South Australia. Of the 64 regions surveyed, Victoria's drought-stricken Mallee-Wimmera and Goulburn face the highest costs. The State of the Regions Report is an annual study that focuses on different issues likely to affect local government across the country. The latest report, released yesterday, zeroes in on climate change and, for the first time, grapples with the likely household costs of the world's environmental woes. The pricing of climate change includes carbon costs (estimated at \$33 tonne for greenhouse emissions when carbon taxes are introduced), loss of farm income through drought and other climatic problems and the cost of water provision. National Economics estimates that climate change is already slashing farm output by \$3 billion a year and that \$40 million to \$50 million will have to be spent on additional water-provision measures by 2020. Australian Local Government Association president, Paul Bell, says the key finding is that the costs would fall

disproportionately on the regions that could least afford them. National Economics spokesman Tony Hyland says the report further highlights the gaps between metropolitan and rural Australia. "Metropolitan households tend to be wealthier," Mr. Hyland said. "Yet the impacts of climate change are more severe on rural, less affluent households." This regional inequity, the report said, raises questions about the wisdom and ethics of recent and proposed federal tax cuts because income tax cuts most benefits households in wealthier areas.

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The report argues that local government and regional communities are leading the way in addressing the climate change "crisis" while federal and state governments lag behind. The report uses the case study of central Victoria's Mount Alexander Shire, centred on Castlemaine and Maldon, as an example of a council tackling climate change head on. The shire has detailed plans to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 30pc on 2000 levels by 2010. National Economics says the spin-off of such policies is positive marketing for the municipality. "This developing image of the shire is starting to attract the interest of green businesses so the prospects of establishing a cluster of 'new economy' businesses in the shire are looking positive," the report says. It calls for the urgent introduction of high-speed broadband internet, warning that Australia will continue to trail international competitors without better information and communication technology. National Economics estimates that business has been forgoing \$3 billion in annual income and 30,000 jobs through inferior internet access. It says Australia is behind the OECD standard, and the gap is widening. It cautions that the level of household debt — now growing by \$120 billion a year compared to \$24 billion for disposable income — is unsustainable. "There are negatives building up that will bring the good times to an end," the report says. SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax Media publication.

Climate change research gets a lift

A \$3.7 million research facility in Horsham, Vic, will use the latest climate change technology to simulate future atmospheric conditions. The technology will help in predicting the impact that climate change may have on plant crops, the Vic Minister for Agriculture, Joe Helper, announced today. Speaking at the facility's official opening in Horsham, Mr. Helper said the Free Air Carbon Dioxide Enrichment (FACE) (CO₂) facility would investigate how crops respond to carbon dioxide increases in the atmosphere as a result of climate change. "The research facility uses cutting-edge equipment, including special gas release systems, to consistently expose naturally grown wheat crops to different CO₂ concentrations," he said. "The facility allows many aspects of the crop ecosystem to be measured. "The Horsham FACE is the first facility of its kind in Australia to be used on crops, using technology from similar research facilities in the United States, Europe and China. "While it is difficult to predict the impact of climate change, this facility will be an important asset in helping Government and industry to make informed decisions in preparing the Australian grain industry for atmospheric changes that may eventuate." Mr. Helper said. "The Brumby Government is investing heavily in research projects to lower the risk of climate change and ensure the state's agriculture industries remain competitive. "Testing at the facility will focus on the behaviour and responses of wheat, experiencing the drought-prone and nutrient limited conditions typical of Australia." Dr Rob Norton from the University of Melbourne said FACE experiments provide information that increases the accuracy of existing crop models. Models are used to predict what is likely to happen with climate change, with CO₂, rainfall and temperature all forecast to change significantly in the future. Dr Norton said FACE is the only technology available in the world that can accurately test the interactions of elevated CO₂ with nutrition, soil conditions, water, and temperature on plants and trees under natural field conditions. "FACE technology is able to elevate CO₂ without compromising or modifying other variables in the field and so we will be able to test the impact of a range of CO₂ levels against the other factors in plant growth to identify the opportunities presented by climate change," he said. "While the dramatic rises in CO₂ over the past 100 years are a major contributor to climate change, the gas has the potential to increase plant growth and overall crop productivity, possibly offsetting some of the predicted negative impacts of climate change." SOURCE: Breaking national news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

The Australian - Kyoto shift welcome at Bali

Kevin Rudd's embrace of the Kyoto Protocol will "absolutely change the dynamic" of the UN conference on climate change in Bali next week, one of the world body's top officials in Jakarta said yesterday. Indonesian director for the UN Development Program, Hakan Bjorkman, said that "in purely climate change terms" the federal election result was a "big step" towards addressing global warming. "For any country to decide to join the multilateral effort to sign and ratify is great news," he said. "It will help change the dynamic of Bali." Indonesia has rushed through a request for UN rules to be bent so Australia can sit at the negotiating table for a successor agreement to Kyoto, the greenhouse emissions reduction protocol that expires in 2012. Environment

Minister Rachmat Witoelar told The Australian yesterday he expected Mr Rudd's impact on the Bali conference to be "very encouraging and positive". Mr Witoelar, the UN president of the Bali event, said he was hopeful Australia would now be able to fully participate in meetings at the two-week summit. This would include joining the Ad-Hoc Working Group, the body charged with determining greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for industrialised countries.

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A spokesman for Mr Witoelar said the minister had pushed the UN to allow Australia special dispensation, since it would normally be required to wait 90 days after any ratification before joining the negotiations. "We have to clarify it but there may still be some flexibility," said his spokeswoman, Amanda Katili. "The minister has been very keen. He has pushed for as much participation as possible for Australia. We're just still not sure what kind it can be." Under the Howard government's approach, Australia's delegation would have been restricted to attending as an observer only the non-critical meetings on emissions reduction and adaptation strategies. Once Australia ratifies Kyoto, the US will remain the only major nation outside the protocol. Mr Rudd said yesterday he had spoken to US climate change campaigner Al Gore since the election, and that the two would meet in Bali. "We talked a lot about climate change and some of the important things that need to be done globally," the prime minister-elect said. "We'll resume that conversation in Bali over a cup of tea or something stronger." Mr Rudd said he was "seeking further advice" on how quickly Australia could ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The head of the world body with which Mr Gore shared the Nobel peace prize this year for their joint work on global warming has expressed confidence the increased Australian participation at the Bali conference will deliver results. Speaking in New Delhi, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change chairman Rajendra Pachauri said he expected "a likely agreement on a roadmap" to emerge from the conference. "My information is that some of the delegations who have been obstructionist in the past will be much more co-operative this time," said Dr Pachauri, referring to "developments in Australia" and increased climate concern in the US.

Poor to bear brunt of warming

Indonesia's 80 million people living below or just above the poverty line are facing a rapid spread of killer disease, major water shortages and severe malnutrition from global warming. A new UN report warns that Indonesia will be among the hardest hit by climate disaster, even as it emits more global warming greenhouse gases than every nation but the US and China, under current assessments. The report, *The Other Half of Climate Change*, was launched yesterday by Indonesia's Environment Minister, Rachmat Witoelar. It was produced in conjunction with the UN Development Program's annual human development report, which this year focused on climate change ahead of a two-week conference on the issue beginning in Bali next week. Both studies urge a global focus on poverty, with the Indonesia-specific survey warning that unless climate change is addressed, recent increases in flooding in Jakarta are likely to continue - displacing hundreds of thousands of the city's poorest people. The Indonesian capital, parts of which are below sea level, is vulnerable to ocean rises of just 50cm but is also feeling the impact of land subsidence due to overdevelopment, the survey finds. A half-metre sea level rise would permanently inundate three areas of the city and three areas in nearby Bekasi. Other parts of the archipelagic nation, with a population of about 230 million, are also under threat from sea level rises. In Central Kalimantan, where deforestation and peatland fires are the biggest cause of Indonesia's greenhouse gas emissions, subsistence villagers are coping with the disappearance of traditional forest farming lands by seeking work on palm oil plantations. Ironically, the palm oil boom - which produces atmospheric carbon releases greater than India's energy-driven pollution - is being fuelled by expected demand for bio-diesel alternatives to traditional fossil fuels. Southeast Asia has long been subject to weather fluctuations and shifts in the monsoon cycles, on which the largely agricultural and aquacultural communities of the region rely heavily. But the Indonesia-specific report's authors warn global warming is making some traditional farming activities unreliable. "For instance, in west Timor we know malnutrition has always been a problem there, but we need to increase the capacity of farmers to respond to climate forecasts, so that they know whether a given rainfall signals the wet season onset or not," said UN Development Program Indonesia director Hakan Bjorkman. He said farmers in remote areas using traditional weather prediction methods were unable to interpret climate data sent from the central Bureau of Meteorology. This led to their planting crops at the wrong time. Malnutrition across East Nusa Tenggara province - which includes west Timor - is estimated at between 32 and 50 per cent. Compounding the problem, climate change is likely to foster an increase in water-borne and mosquito-borne diseases. The report warns of security of water supply becoming a major issue. Many major rivers have reduced water flows, and in coastal areas groundwater loss and rising sea levels will bring contamination of drinking and irrigation supplies.

Rainfalls proclaim arrival of La Nina

La Nina has begun to deliver, with above-average rains falling this month over the eastern half of Queensland and NSW, as well as in Victoria. During the past week farmers in the Lockyer Valley, west of Brisbane, have received falls of between 60mm and 120mm. Linton Brimblecombe, who grows beetroot, grain and lucerne at Forest Hill in the Lockyer Valley said the falls have been wonderful. "But it is interesting that it is only in the areas where it has been over 100mm that any water has run," he said. "My creek, Sandy Creek, we had a small flow in it which we were all excited about, but it has practically stopped now."

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A month ago Mr Brimblecombe ran out of water. He started the year with his dam about 30 per cent full. "We carefully used our water, we kept that water just for the beetroot. We stopped all other irrigated cropping." Now rain has soaked the ground and wet the bottom of his dam. It is still empty but he is not complaining. "If we had water (in the dam) we would be doing sweet corn and sunflowers. But we have dryland crops, we will be planting sorghum. We are very happy about that." It has been a long time since good rains soaked the land and ran in the creeks. The last time Mr Brimblecombe's dam was nearly full was October 2005. The last really big rains were in May 1996. He is encouraged by Bureau of Meteorology projections there is a 65 to 70 per cent chance of above-average rainfall for his region. He said the rain that fell during the last week had soaked into the dry ground, priming it for the next fall to run off into the creeks and dams. "We need a really heavy fall of at least 100mm, possibly more like 200, to get some serious creek flows." He might be in luck. Blair Trewin from the Bureau of Meteorology said the forecast for the next few days was for widespread rainfall, with at least double figure totals. Dr Trewin said the rainfalls over eastern NSW and southeast Queensland were linked to the late-developing La Nina, which had been intensifying during the past month. "It is a classic summer rain situation we have got here."

The Advertiser -Gardeners defy bans

A large number of householders are vowing to ignore the State Government's tough water restrictions to keep their gardens alive this summer. The results of an AdelaideNow poll, taken just days before the start of a predicted record hot summer, comes as Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald warns of harsher restrictions if consumption "spikes" in December. In the online survey of 1282 people, 45 per cent say they will ignore water restrictions, 36 per cent will obey the rules and 18 per cent would use grey water. Ms Maywald said current restrictions, which include household watering with a trigger nozzle for up to three hours on one day each week, would remain in force throughout December. She warned sustained breaches of the water restrictions could result in tougher bans if consumption levels became unsustainable. "If people do not abide by the restrictions and water consumption starts to rise, they will jeopardise our ability to maintain restrictions at the same level all throughout summer," she said. "Those people who wilfully ignore the water restrictions will disadvantage it for the rest of us and they risk facing penalties themselves." An SA Water consumption tracking graph shows Adelaide is sitting about 20 per cent below the target consumption level used to determine the level of water restrictions, using 124,424 megalitres since January 1. That is compared to 149,455 for the same time last year. Among AdelaideNow bloggers vowing to ignore water restrictions was Danny Warren, of Adelaide, who said many gardeners were already flouting the bans. "It's easy for polities to make glib comments about how well we're doing with the water restrictions but the numbers of people ignoring the restrictions is large," he said. "On my way to the bus today at 7.30am I passed a house with microsprays running in the front garden and water running over the path to the gutter. One of my neighbours insists on hosing their fence down and walking home at night I often see people, with hoses, looking very furtive." In September, Ms Maywald sparked a furore when she was reported as saying gardeners could not be trusted to control their watering and blamed "wasteful householders" for the tough restrictions. Yesterday, she appealed for householders to not be selfish and "disadvantage" those who do the right thing. Premier Mike Rann yesterday said a decision by State Cabinet on final details of a desalination plant for Adelaide was "imminent". The \$1.4 billion plant, to supply 25 per cent of the city's fresh water, will be built at either Port Stanvac or Pelican Point, Mr Rann said. The final report from the Government's Desalination Working Group would again go before Cabinet on Monday, he said. "It's down to a couple of sites and we're just getting some more expert opinion," Mr Rann told radio station FIVEaa yesterday.

As reported by The Advertiser yesterday, this means the Government will miss its November deadline for a final decision on the plant. Despite last week telling a water and mining conference details would be finalised by the end of the month, Ms Maywald yesterday said such a deadline was "absolute nonsense". "There will be more information made public once Cabinet has had an opportunity to consider all the recommendations of the report," she said. However, Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith yesterday suggested Cabinet was divided

over the plant, with Treasurer Kevin Foley opposed to the project because of the impact on his finely balanced budget.

29th

FarmOnLine

Farmers won't lose 'clean green' price premium

Claims that the introduction genetically modified (GM) crops will damage Australia's markets have proven to be unfounded, according to Victorian Farmers Federation president, Simon Ramsay. Australian growers do not risk losing the premiums paid for this country's clean green imaged, he says.

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He was commenting on Tuesday's announcement that Victoria will lift its GM crops ban. Mr. Ramsay says the decision to lift the moratorium will benefit not only farmers, but also the environment and the Victorian economy. "GM canola will offer our grain growers higher yields, better weed control, and increased profitability," he says. "We are competing with 10 million farmers in 22 countries who are already providing GM products. "Providing farmers with the ability to choose to use world's best technology is essential to maintaining a strong and profitable farm sector." Mr. Ramsay says the decision was the culmination of four years of working with industry to get a unilateral support for a lifting of the moratorium. The decision was based on science, facts and economic argument. The dairy industry, he says, has overcome early concerns and is now satisfied that GM provides greater benefits. Mr. Ramsay said GM and GM-free product could coexist. Market forces will resolve segregation issues by setting tolerance levels based on demand. SOURCE: Extract from GM report and analysis, *Stock & Land, Vic*, November 29.

The Australian - Power station plans shelved

Plans for new coal-fired power stations have been shelved until at least 2020, when technology to capture and store greenhouse emissions may be available. In the wake of Kevin Rudd's emphatic victory, generators said yesterday it was now too risky to consider building a coal-fired power station unless its emissions could be significantly reduced when faced with Labor's commitment to make cuts of 60 per cent by 2050. The National Generators Forum, representing the 22 main utilities, expects rising demand for electricity until 2020 to be supplied mainly by new gas-fired power stations and wind farms. Electricity prices are certain to rise as gas releases about half the greenhouse emissions of coal but is close to 20 per cent more expensive. Wind-generated power is about double the cost. NGF executive director John Boshier said Labor's 20 per cent mandatory renewable energy target by 2020 would supply about 45,000 gigawatt hours, or half of new generation capacity. Technology to capture and store emissions from coal- and gas-fired power stations is under development, but not expected to be commercialised until 2020. "Unless a new coal-fired power station was capture-ready, it would be unlikely to be built in the present environment and I think investors would look at it as too risky," Mr Boshier said. "Coal-fired power stations will keep going until the end of their economic life, but what that means is - to achieve big cuts in emissions - new power stations have to be low-emission. And, so, building new coal-fired power stations doesn't help to achieve that target." One big coal and gas generator, TRUenergy, has committed not to build any new coal-fired power stations. State governments are increasingly looking to the private sector for new investment in electricity generation, with growing speculation that the Queensland and NSW governments are considering privatising utilities. The Queensland Government sold off state-owned electricity retailers late last year, and the NSW Government is expected to announce the future of its generators and retailers at the end of this year. The pessimistic view of generators is not shared by the main coal-mining union, which says investment in coal-fired power depends on the details of climate change policies to be unveiled next year. Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union general president Tony Maher said governments or the private sector would build new coal-fired power stations if they were guaranteed a share of the expanding energy market. "It's only a matter of taking a bit more risk," he said. "The private sector will build it if there is a guaranteed market share."

We disagree on some policies, but it's business as usual: NFF

Differences remain, especially in industrial relations and Labor's broadband policy, but National Farmers Federation president, David Crombie, says the NFF looks forward to working with Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the new Federal Agriculture Minister, Tony Burke. "In the lead up to, and during the campaign, Labor addressed much of the NFF's rural and technical education, drought relief, water security, international trade and quarantine priorities," he said. "It committed to working with the NFF on climate change adaption and mitigation strategies. "And, on the need for a strategic transport infrastructure overhaul. "But Labor's broadband policy fails to provide for rural Australia's future by syphoning the \$2 billion Communications Fund's perpetual investment in the bush to pay for it. "But it's business as usual for the NFF." SOURCE: NFF

Joyce reveals desire for Nats' top job

Barnaby Joyce wants to be leader of the Nationals, but he won't stand against Warren Truss for the top job next Monday. Senator Joyce has the ambition but not the numbers to take the leadership which - barring any unexpected late nominations - will be filled by Mr. Truss, the party's current deputy. "I wouldn't stand against Warren Truss," Senator Joyce told AAP. "I wouldn't have the numbers, and also I would prefer not to stand against another Queenslander." Senator Joyce says he does not intend to nominate for deputy and would prefer Ron Boswell's job - leader of the Nationals in the senate. "At this stage I am more interested in the senate - to be leader of the senate," he said.

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"I believe strongly in my party, so in the future I would like some management, leadership role in it, and, you know, I think that the public support that as well." Senator Joyce wants to lead his party one day but says he will act on political realities rather than personal aspirations. "I will be guided by my colleagues, because it's all numbers," he said. "It doesn't matter what your personal aspirations are, it is what your colleagues' aspirations are - that is the hard reality of politics. "I do have aspirations for leadership, but I also have the reality that I don't have the numbers." Asked if he would rule out standing for leader in the future, Senator Joyce replied, "Hell, no. "In opposition you are guided by the reality of the polls." Senator Joyce said he would not challenge a leader who was good for the party. "But if the polls say that you are disappearing into oblivion, not only should you stand, you've got an obligation to stand," he said. "If the polls say that you are disappearing down the gurgler, then you have to stand for the leadership role." For now, Senator Joyce gives Mr. Truss, 59, his endorsement. "Warren is a very capable minister and a very stable person," he said. "Without a shadow of a doubt he is - you know, would have to be one of the most competent ministers in the National party and, more than that, one of the most competent ministers we have had in a long while. "I would never, ever doubt the capacity and abilities of Warren Truss, and it is clear he has got the support of his colleagues." Mr. Truss threw his hat into the ring to replace Mark Vaile after outgoing agriculture minister Peter McGauran said he did not want to be leader. (See separate story Nov 28) SOURCE: AAP

30th

FarmOnLine

Agriculture Minister Tony Burke

Prime Minister-elect Kevin Rudd outlined the makeup of his new Cabinet after a meeting of the Labor caucus at Parliament House Thursday. • Tony Burke will be the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. "He will have a wide and extensive brief in dealing with the needs of the bush, dealing with the needs of rural Australia, dealing with the needs of rural industry," Mr. Rudd said. "For me this is a central and critical portfolio in government." But he will be in the outer Ministry, not a member of Cabinet. Formerly the Shadow Minister for Immigration, Mr. Burke represents the electorate of Watson, an inner Sydney metropolitan electorate. With a background in small business, he entered Federal Parliament in 2004 and was formerly Shadow Minister for Small Business. He has an Arts/Law degree from the University of Sydney. Former Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Tasmanian Senator Kerry O'Brien missed out on the Ministry.

- Peter Garrett will be Minister for the Environment and has a spot in Cabinet.
- Penny Wong will be the Minister for Climate Change and Water.

"When I attend Bali in just a couple of weeks time, I will be attending that conference with Peter and Penny," Mr. Rudd said. "A core part of Labor's agenda for the future is climate change, water and the environment."

"Penny will have responsibility for our international negotiations on Kyoto and Kyoto plus. "She will have responsibility for the negotiations of our domestic emissions trading regime," he said. "She will also have responsibility for the harmonisation of the existing state-based mandatory renewable energy targets and regimes with an integrated national mandatory target regime." Mr. Rudd said Mr. Garrett, on top of the environment portfolio, would be responsible for delivering key climate-change programs within Australia. "Solar programs, water-efficiency programs and general energy efficiency programs as well." • Anthony Albanese has been made Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government.

- Nicola Roxon will be Minister for Health. SOURCE: AAP and *FarmOnline*

Nelson, Bishop head new Liberal team

Brendan Nelson has defeated high profile MP Malcolm Turnbull to win leadership of the Liberal party, which was voted out of government last Saturday. Dr Nelson, the outgoing Defence Minister, replaces outgoing Prime Minister, John Howard. West Australian MP and former education minister, Julie Bishop, is the new deputy, outgoing Treasurer, Peter Costello, announced after the Liberal party meeting in Canberra on Thursday afternoon. The result of the ballot was close - 45 to 42 (votes). SOURCE: AAP

NEWS.com - No fun in the sun

Children will not be allowed to play under sprinklers this summer because of tougher water restrictions. Last summer, using a sprinkler was exempt so long as it was clearly for children's play, was portable and the sprinkler was placed on a lawn". But SA Water yesterday ruled that "while the enhanced Level 3 restrictions are in place, there is to be no use of sprinklers for any reason". Those caught breaching the rules would face an on-the-spot fine of \$315. Youngsters Fynn Martin, 4, and Brynn Arnoldus, 5, of Semaphore, both wish they could play under sprinklers during summer, which is tipped to be a scorcher. "I'm not happy," Fynn said. "It's always good fun and helps keep me cool."

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Today Adelaide will equal its hottest November on record if it reaches the forecast top temperature of 32C. Yesterday's high of 33C lifted the average maximum this month to 27.9C. The hottest November average for Adelaide's Kent Town weather station was 28C in 1982. Climate meteorologist Darren Ray said the combined November average for its Kent Town and West Tce weather stations would be close to the warmest since 1911. "Parafield Airport is likely to reach record November mean maximum temperatures (since 1929) as are Streaky Bay and Nullarbor," he said. If today's forecast is correct, November will have had 11 days of temperatures over 30C, compared with the average of 6.8 days. The weather bureau has forecast a 65 to 70 per cent chance of above-average temperatures during December, January and February for the Adelaide, Yorke Peninsula, Riverland, Mallee and South-East districts. "The weak La Nina signal has strengthened a little to become a late-starting but moderate La Nina," Mr Ray said. "This is producing the signal for a greater possibility of above-average rainfall on the east coast of Australia through summer, seen in the seasonal climate outlook, which, if occurring, may help to increase flows into the Murray River over summer." Adelaide's rainfall at Kent Town this month has been 28mm, which is 4.1mm below average. The lowest-ever recorded rainfall for November at Kent Town was 1mm in 1996. Last year, 18mm of rain fell at Kent Town.

Turn off street lights: mayor

Street lights should be turned off after midnight to cut council costs and reduce greenhouse emissions, says Mitcham mayor Ivan Brooks. Mr Brooks will urge councils across Australia to consider his move at the week-long National General Assembly of Australian Local Government under way in Darwin. He said street lighting accounted for 63 per cent of the council's greenhouse gas emissions and provided one of its biggest bills. "Nearly everybody I know is in a car or taxi or some other form of transport at that time of the night, they don't wander around in the dark," he said. "Obviously, if there's any areas considered unsafe then the lights should be on. "That's something to take into consideration." Port Adelaide Enfield Mayor Gary Johanson supported the move. He said an increase in crime was one reason lights were left on so late. "Criminals really have got a lot to answer for," he said. "People have a real phobia to go anywhere there's no lights and this shouldn't be the way." Mr Johanson said sensor-monitored lighting was one option councils and the State Government could consider. "I'm not sure how possible it is but it may be that sensor lights in dark areas, rather than the normal street lighting, is a better option," he said. The calls come as figures show street lighting accounts for more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions among 15 Adelaide councils. The councils, including Mitcham, Marion, Unley, Port Adelaide Enfield, Prospect and Campbelltown, have put forward a \$60,000 funding proposal to the Local Government Association to look at possible solutions. The association's research and development scheme has yet to approve the proposal but director of government relations and communications Chris Russell said an announcement was close. A part of the money would be used to employ a project officer to work with councils, the State Government and ETSA Utilities to look at energy-saving solutions.

Adelaide.now.com - Wong gets cracking on climate change

Incoming Climate Change Minister Senator Penny Wong will meet with senior officials today as the new Rudd Government prepares to reverse Australia's long-standing opposition to the Kyoto Protocol. Representatives from about 190 governments will attend an 11-day United Nations conference opening in Bali, Indonesia, on Monday, to negotiate a post-Kyoto agreement for reducing global greenhouse-gas emissions. Australian officials under the outgoing coalition government have spent many years arguing that the Kyoto accord, which sets limits on emissions, was not an effective solution to global warming. "I have a very profound sense of the responsibility that I have been given," Senator Wong told ABC radio. She said no one who had been listening to prime minister-elect Kevin Rudd during the past year would be under any illusions about the government's position. "We have made it absolutely clear that we will ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We want to be part of the global solution on climate change," Senator Wong said. "We don't want to continue the obstructionist position that our predecessors had. "I'll be meeting with all departmental officials today. "... I think all Australians know we have a very clear view about the way forward and the way forward is ratification, and (for) Australia to play

a leadership role again in these global negotiations in what is the critical issue facing our generation." Senator Wong said Australia could play a key role in promoting the battle against climate change. "I want to be effective. What we want is an effective outcome. What we want is effective advocacy and effective negotiation," she said. "This is an extremely important conference. It will set the road map for the post Kyoto arrangements, and I think Australia's ratification of the post-Kyoto Protocol and the changing of the government's position in Australia will give new impetus to this very important negotiation." Climate change warning for SA Senator Wong has warned of the dire consequences to South Australia of inaction on the water crisis.

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Senator Wong received a call from Kevin Rudd on Wednesday advising her of her new senior ministry of climate change and water. She told *The Advertiser* yesterday that, as a South Australian, she was mindful of the impact of water shortages. "I think all of us in South Australia understand the water crisis has a very direct, personal reality for us," she said. "Clearly, federal Labor understands that water is a crucial issue for SA. "What we have seen over the last 11 1/2 years is too much of the blame game. "I am determined that we will be part of the solution."

I feel honoured - Wong

Senator Wong said she was honoured to earn a position in the Cabinet. "I think the thing I am most profoundly aware of is the responsibility of this role and the privilege of serving in this role," she said. "Not many people have the responsibility and privilege of being a Cabinet minister in a Federal Government." She said she was also proud of the high level of female representation in Mr Rudd's ministry. The elevation of fellow South Australian Kate Ellis also showed SA was a "key state for federal Labor", she said. "I think it is a great thing that we are getting to a stage in politics where women can get into Cabinet, where women can get into senior roles," she said. "Parliament works best when it reflects the diversity of the Australian people." Senator Wong was appointed to the Senate in 2001 and most recently held the shadow portfolios of public administration, corporate governance and workforce participation. She was also Labor's national campaign spokesman during the election.

Hottest November since 1982

Adelaide has just experienced its warmest November for 25 years, with the Bureau of Meteorology at Kent Town recording 31.5C shortly before 2pm today. This raised the average maximum temperature for the month of November to 28C - well above the long-term average of 24.8C - making it the warmest November in terms of daytime temperatures since 1982. Records for the Kent Town site began in 1977. Matt Pearce from eatherzone.com.au said it was a similar story right across South Australia with well above average temperatures. For example, Streaky Bay, along the west coast, had an average maximum of 29 degrees, making it the warmest November there in 80 years of records. The nights were also mild. Adelaide's average minimum temperature of 15 degrees was slightly above the long-term normal of 14. This made it the mildest November in terms of overnight temperatures since 2003. Overnight temperatures were also above average across much of South Australia. For example, Price had an average minimum of 15 degrees, the highest for November in 54 years of records. "Humidity levels have been up across South Australia over the last few weeks, as a result of moist northeasterly winds feeding in from the warm Coral and Tasman Seas. These high humidity levels tend to result in warmer nights," he said. Rainfall was close to normal during November. Adelaide picked up 28mm throughout the month, almost right on its long-term normal. It was a dry month across northern parts of the state, but agricultural areas fared much better than they have done recently. Many parts of the south-east received well above average rainfall, including Robe which picked up 97mm, its highest November total in 147 years of records. "Rainfall is likely to remain pretty close to normal across South Australia during summer. It will stay warmer than normal, especially during the days," Mr Pearce said. The weather bureau has forecast a 65-70 per cent chance of above-average temperatures during December, January and February for the Adelaide, Yorke Peninsula, Riverland, Mallee and South-East districts. "The weak La Nina signal has strengthened a little to become a late-starting but moderate La Nina," Mr Ray said. "This is producing the signal for a greater possibility of above-average rainfall on the east coast of Australia through summer, seen in the seasonal climate outlook, which, if occurring, may help to increase flows into the Murray River over summer." Adelaide's rainfall at Kent Town this month has been 28mm, which is 4.1mm below average. The lowest-ever recorded rainfall for November at Kent Town was 1mm in 1996. Last year, 18mm of rain fell at Kent Town.

Take shower test and save

Households can save hundreds of litres of water by cutting back their time in the shower. Ten minutes in an old-style shower would use 200 litres, compared with only 36 litres for four minutes with a low-flow showerhead. That is a saving of 164 litres a day or nearly 60 kilolitres a year, worth \$69. SA Water chief executive Anne

Howe said shower timers helped people understand their own water use and see just how significant the savings could be. "We'd like to see as many people as possible - children and adults, parents and grandparents - setting themselves a short shower challenge, calculating how much water they use and trying to cut back to a maximum of four minutes," she said. "Showers use between 9 litres and 20 litres of water a minute - so just cutting back by one minute every day, you can save more than 7000 litres of water a year." Hannah, 17, says she competes every day with her brother Hugh for shower time. She typically has 15 to 20-minute showers, adding up to hundreds of litres of water going down the drain. "I have music on, so I start singing along and I get distracted," Hannah said. She said cutting her time under the water to four minutes would be a challenge.

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"I could do it but I would be rushing. It wouldn't be a relaxing shower," she said. You can time yourself with The Advertiser four-minute shower timer offered as part of the "waterwise weekend". Take the token in tomorrow's paper to one of 378 participating outlets: Foodland, BP, On The Run or News Power stores.

No fun in the sun

Children will not be allowed to play under sprinklers this summer because of tougher water restrictions. Last summer, using a sprinkler was exempt so long as it was clearly for children's play, was portable and the sprinkler was placed on a lawn". But SA Water yesterday ruled that "while the enhanced Level 3 restrictions are in place, there is to be no use of sprinklers for any reason". Those caught breaching the rules would face an on-the-spot fine of \$315. Youngsters Fynn Martin, 4, and Brynn Arnoldus, 5, of Semaphore, both wish they could play under sprinklers during summer, which is tipped to be a scorcher. "I'm not happy," Fynn said. "It's always good fun and helps keep me cool." Today Adelaide will equal its hottest November on record if it reaches the forecast top temperature of 32C. Yesterday's high of 33C lifted the average maximum this month to 27.9C. The hottest November average for Adelaide's Kent Town weather station was 28C in 1982. Climate meteorologist Darren Ray said the combined November average for its Kent Town and West Tce weather stations would be close to the warmest since 1911. "Parafield Airport is likely to reach record November mean maximum temperatures (since 1929) as are Streaky Bay and Nullarbor," he said. If today's forecast is correct, November will have had 11 days of temperatures over 30C, compared with the average of 6.8 days. The weather bureau has forecast a 65 to 70 per cent chance of above-average temperatures during December, January and February for the Adelaide, Yorke Peninsula, Riverland, Mallee and South-East districts. "The weak La Nina signal has strengthened a little to become a late-starting but moderate La Nina," Mr Ray said. "This is producing the signal for a greater possibility of above-average rainfall on the east coast of Australia through summer, seen in the seasonal climate outlook, which, if occurring, may help to increase flows into the Murray River over summer." Adelaide's rainfall at Kent Town this month has been 28mm, which is 4.1mm below average. The lowest-ever recorded rainfall for November at Kent Town was 1mm in 1996. Last year, 18mm of rain fell at Kent Town.