

The Australian
Mill will be built: Howard

John Howard has dramatically intervened in the Tasmanian pulp mill debate to reassure the timber industry that the \$2 billion project "can and will be built".

The statement appeared to pre-empt the decision of Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull and came as sources told The Weekend Australian the Prime Minister was among senior Liberals pushing Mr Turnbull to approve the mill quickly. Instead, Mr Turnbull -- under pressure from an anti-mill campaign in his marginal Sydney seat of Wentworth -- has expressed "grave concerns" about the massive Gunns project, and has extended his assessment by six weeks to seek the opinion of Chief Scientist Jim Peacock.

Mr Turnbull has even said he is "not unsympathetic" to calls to relocate the mill from the Tamar Valley wine and tourism region, in the marginal seat of Bass, to a less sensitive site.

There appear to be growing tensions within the Coalition on the issue, as federal Labor for the first time yesterday promised to impose new restrictions on the mill, including greater use of plantation timber.

But as federal Labor environment spokesman Peter Garrett was toughening Labor's stance, Mr Howard made it clear he wanted the mill built.

"I still remain very optimistic that this pulp mill can and will be built," the Prime Minister said. "It is very important for jobs in Tasmania and I am pro-jobs. I demonstrated three years ago (in the 2004 forestry election policy) that I'm a better friend of the workers in the timber industry in Tasmania than anyone in the ALP."

Sensing that he and other anti-mill campaigners may be targeting the wrong man, Mr Howard's former close adviser businessman Geoffrey Cousins changed tack yesterday.

Mr Cousins, a confidant and adviser to Mr Howard for more than a decade until last year, warned the Prime Minister that the mill decision was not his to make, with Mr Turnbull having sole statutory responsibility. "These were interesting comments from the Prime Minister, but it is not his call as he does not hold the conch," Mr Cousins said. "Malcolm Turnbull has always been at great pains to say he will play it by the book, so if a negative report comes back from the Chief Scientist, as minister he will have to reject approval for the mill.

"The attitude of anyone else in the Government is irrelevant."

This was an extraordinary turnaround by the leading businessman, who has been waging a campaign in Wentworth questioning Mr Turnbull's commitment to a thorough assessment of the mill, and to the environment.

Mr Howard's comments came after Tasmanian Premier Paul Lennon publicly challenged him to stand by his 2004 election pledge to ensure timber workers were never again used as a "political football" in a federal election.

Last night, the Lennon Government was understood to be heartened by Mr Howard's pledge of support for the mill, which was approved by a vote of Tasmania's parliament on Thursday.

Mr Lennon had warned that Mr Howard's refusal to guarantee a decision before the election threatened to cause delays that could make the mill's financiers drop the project.

Mr Howard yesterday stressed that despite this refusal, his Government wanted the mill to proceed. "Everybody should take a deep breath -- they should understand that my and our essential position is that we support the pulp mill," he said.

"And I want people to know that. But we've got to be satisfied that it stacks up environmentally."

Mr Howard also made it clear he did not support calls by some Liberals -- including former NSW party president Bill Heffernan -- to consider moving the mill from the Tamar to a less sensitive site 100km west in Hampshire, in the seat of Braddon.

"What then happens is that the people who are opposed to it, no matter where it's going to be built, find reasons why it shouldn't be built in the alternative," Mr Howard said.

However, Ben Quin, the Liberal candidate for the marginal seat of Lyons, which includes the West Tamar, repeated his call for relocation of the mill, which he likened to the Titanic.

"The risks associated with this project could be significantly mitigated if the mill were to be constructed on a less sensitive site," Mr Quin said.

After a barrage of criticism for "losing his voice" on the pulp mill issue, Mr Garrett yesterday promised he would insist the project relied far less on native forests for feedstock.

"A Rudd Labor government would seek to maximise the proportion of wood supply for the pulp mill which came from plantations," he said in a statement responding to questions from the Crikey website.

"We will use every endeavour to ensure high-conservation-value forests are not used for mill feedstock."

Gunns proposes to initially source 80 per cent of its feedstock from native forests, although this will be reduced to 20 per cent after five years.

This has been widely criticised by conservationists and some industry analysts who accuse Gunns of seeking to exploit a remaining cheap native forest resource while exporting plantation woodchips.

Mr Turnbull has suggested Labor could have a role in approving the mill, under caretaker conventions, if he has not made a decision before the looming election is called. However, Labor sources said it was extremely unlikely the party would agree to a bipartisan decision in the heat of a campaign.

Gunns's main financier, ANZ, revealed it was yet to decide to finally commit to the project and first needed to test it against new social and environmental standards for investment.

Financial Services Union policy director Rod Masson said financing the controversial mill would put ANZ in contrast with the banking industry's corporate-social responsibility standards.

Further doubts were aired yesterday about the wisdom of allowing a single project to dominate consumption of Tasmania's forests.

Mr Quin said he was concerned forest contractors would be left in limbo if the mill had to be shut down because of pollution problems.

"What happens to the Tasmanian forest industry if some operational problem, controlled under the permits, causes the mill to close for even a brief period? It will be chaos," Mr Quin said in a letter to newspapers.

"Don't tell us it won't happen -- we heard that with the Titanic and the space shuttle. Both were constructed using best available technology."

CSIRO forest scientist Chris Beadle, speaking in a private capacity, warned that projected wood flows might not be sufficient to feed the mill's need for up to four million tonnes of woodchips each year. His assessment of Tasmania's plantation forest estate suggested there was a potential shortfall of 600,000 tonnes of woodchips on Gunn's projected need in 2020. "In other words, plantations will be unable to supply the mill's wood requirements at the levels suggested," he said.

Additional reporting: Scott Murdoch

Biofuel likely as Kiwis go green

Air New Zealand is reducing carbon emissions with a series of innovative programs likely to include the groundbreaking use of biofuels.

The airline is working with aircraft and engine manufacturers to explore new technologies and alternative fuels.

"We've had two or three projects under way looking at biofuels," chief executive Rob Fyfe said this week. "We've got an announcement coming up in a couple of weeks in that regard but we don't want to let the cat out of the bag at the moment on that one.

"We've still got a couple of elements of the deal to lock down before we're in a position to talk formally about it."

Biofuels are of keen interest to airlines and manufacturers, but one problem had been that the energy they produced - their calorific content - was not high enough to power jet engines.

But Mr Fyfe says this is no longer the case: new technologies are emerging to produce biofuel with a much higher calorific content than traditional biodiesels.

"Some of the biofuels that are being produced now have an absolutely identical specification to the existing petroleum fuels, with the one exception that they're not petroleum," he said.

"But if you look at every other chemical characteristic, they can effectively make an equivalent fuel."

The potential use of biofuels is among a range of environmentally friendly initiatives the Kiwi carrier is exploring. It is the launch customer for the fuel efficient, long-range Boeing 787-9 and, like many airlines, has been gradually replacing older aircraft with newer, more fuel-efficient models.

It is talking with its pilots to work out better ways of flying and says an independent review of its procedures has identified opportunities to reduce its fuel burn by a further 3 per cent.

Among them are working with traffic controller Airways New Zealand to develop improved descent profiles, and reducing the flaps setting for landings to decrease drag and boost fuel efficiency.

It is also looking at turning off auxiliary power units when the planes are on the ground and moving to ground power as quickly as possible.

"That means moving to more ground power units, but they are far, far more efficient to run than actually running the auxiliary power units in the aircraft," Mr Fyfe said.

The airline is also looking at an engine wash program to clean blades, which can improve fuel efficiency by as much as 1 per cent. Modifications to aircraft aerodynamics are expected to improve fuel efficiency on some types by up to 1 per cent.

"We're also looking at working with some (navigation) agencies at the moment around changing our flight profile between Hong Kong and London," Mr Fyfe said.

"It means we have to fly over higher terrain and that requires that you carry more oxygen on board because if you get a pressurisation problem it would take you longer to descend. You need to make sure you've got additional oxygen to support that, but by flying that particular profile, we can save about \$NZ3 million (\$2.58 million) a year in terms of operating costs on that route."

Other initiatives include a detailed review of the weight on board Air NZ aircraft, encompassing everything from magazines to carpets.

Mr Fyfe noted that this was largely the secret to the fuel improvement in the 787.

"There are some quite significant opportunities there and on our long-haul aircraft - a 12-hour sector, say, between here and LA - to carry a tonne of weight consumes about half a tonne of fuel," he said.

"So you have about a 50 per cent ratio there for anything you get off the aircraft."

Adelaide.now.com

Bore water running dry

Adelaide's underground water reserves are being ravaged by drought and a dramatic surge in the number of bores, which are not subject to water restrictions.

Official figures show the water table below Adelaide has sunk to its lowest level since citywide records were kept. In some areas, the water table's depth has fallen from 5m to 11m below the surface since 2005, during which time the number of new bores across Adelaide has increased from 85 in 2005 to a record number of 216 so far this year. Water scientists yesterday warned the underground aquifer would eventually run dry if bore use was not cut during the drought.

Wentworth Group of Scientists member Professor Mike Young said groundwater was not "a mine" and its use needed to be limited as quickly as possible.

"A moratorium needs to be put on any further sinking of groundwater wells until the area is reviewed and we start to manage it carefully," said Professor Young, of Adelaide University.

Federal Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull warned if the drought extended Adelaide risked the prospect of one day "running out of water" unless it worked harder to find new supply sources.

Mr Turnbull said he would "look very favourably" at a desalination plant for Adelaide. "If you make just one short-term decision after another and keep your fingers crossed and hope it runs, suddenly you have a prospect of a city . . . running out of water," he said.

Premier Mike Rann reacted angrily to the claims saying work had been going on for a considerable time on desalination, including giving a tick to a plant to service the Olympic Dam mine and the Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula.

Department for Water, Land and Biodiversity figures show groundwater levels have decreased sharply since December, 2004.

A State Government review of groundwater use announced in December, which is considering capping bore numbers, is yet to be completed.

CSIRO land and water groundwater hydrology research group leader Peter Cook said uncontrolled use of groundwater did not make sense.

"The groundwater enters the system from rainfall in the Adelaide Hills and moves down beneath Adelaide over thousands of years and discharges to the coast," he said.

"If you take out great amounts, you can reverse the flow and start seeing the seawater draw back underneath the land."

In the past 12 years, 700 bores have been drilled in the metropolitan area.

So far this year, 216 bores permits have been approved.

Mr Turnbull stepped up his water attacks.

He said the recent dry conditions were "a wake-up call".

Mr Turnbull said the Rann Government was worried that if they built a desalination plant and it rained, the voters would accuse them of "building a white elephant".

Mr Rann said the Government was "putting in the hard yards on finding new sources of water".

"We have a group of experts working on a second desal plant for Adelaide or a five-fold expansion of the Mt Bold reservoir," he said.

Herald Sun

Fenced-in John Brumby cops water serve

Premier John Brumby was barricaded in a machinery yard yesterday for over an hour by farmers angry at the Government's water plans.

Mr Brumby, Police Minister Bob Cameron, Rural and Regional Development Minister Jacinta Allan and several advisers and media representatives were trapped inside the yard for 75 minutes by about 70 irrigators.

The angry locals were protesting about the Government's move to pipe water from the Goulburn Murray region to regional cities and Melbourne.

Mr Brumby was taunted and dubbed "the water weasel" by the vocal crowd, who held placards calling him "the irrigator terminator".

The blockade happened just outside Colbinabbin, east of Bendigo, where Mr Brumby had gone for a media conference to turn the tap on a \$98 million new water pipeline.

The protesters, some carrying placards reading "irrigation feeds the nation", screamed and interjected as the Premier tried to reason with them over the merits of the plan.

Police negotiated with the protesters, who had formed a ring of tractors around the yard.

The blockade started just after 1.30pm and ended after the protesters voted to move their machinery and allow Mr Brumby's to leave just before 3pm.

Water yesterday began flowing from the Bendigo link of the pipeline, which will pump water south from the Goulburn system to the Bendigo region.

Twenty billion litres of water a year will flow to the region via a 46.5km pipe.

Mr Brumby said the "superpipe" would provide water security for the region at a time of unprecedented climate change.

"The goldfields superpipe is vital to the future growth of the Bendigo region," Mr Brumby said.

"The superpipe will provide water to Bendigo to successfully manage supplies through the challenges of drought, climate change and population growth."

But protester and farmer Eril Rathjen said the Government's claim that water piped out of the region would be new water derived from savings was false.

Ms Rathjen said Goulburn irrigators would lose out on their water allocations to supply Melbourne and regional centres, compromising farmers' livelihoods.

She said the group felt it had to force Mr Brumby to listen to its concerns.

City fringe joins water wallies

Owners of rural landholdings in outer Melbourne have joined those living in wealthy suburbs such as Toorak and Camberwell East as the city's biggest residential water users.

New figures show the semi-rural retreats of Wonga Park and Park Orchards are Melbourne's thirstiest residential properties, using more than 1000 litres per household every day last summer.

At the other end of the scale, apartment-dwellers in the inner city are using the least water, with households in Docklands using just 201 litres of water every day, and inner-suburban Carlton residents using 301 litres every day. The Department of Sustainability and Environment has released figures showing each suburb's average water use from January to March, when the city was on stage 3a restrictions, compared with the same period last year, when no restrictions were in place.

They show that almost every suburb reduced its water intake, with wealthy holiday spot Portsea making the biggest savings, cutting household daily water use by 43 per cent.

However, the big gardens at Portsea continued to make the township the eighth-biggest water user, with each household soaking up an average of 885 litres a day.

Water Minister Tim Holding said Melbourne would remain on stage 3a restrictions until at least the end of September, when the level of restrictions would be reviewed.

"Melburnians have been making significant water savings over a long period of time," Mr Holding said.

"Without these savings our water storages would be significantly lower than they currently are.

"It is encouraging to see that almost every suburb has reduced their water use from the same time last year -- with some suburbs cutting their water use by over a third."

Melbourne's reservoirs remained at 38.6 per cent capacity yesterday for the fifth straight day, more than 10 per cent behind last year's storage levels.

Other big water-saving postcodes in the past year were Sorrento, which saved 37 per cent, Blairgowrie and Doreen, which each saved more than 32 per cent and Eltham, Diamond Creek and Docklands, which cut their average daily water use by more than 29 per cent.

At the other end of the scale, Parkville's water use went up by 6.7 per cent, reflecting the influx of new residents into the old Commonwealth Games village.

On average, Melbourne households cut their daily water use from 608 litres last year to 534 litres this year, a drop of 12.3 per cent.

Postcodes where many homes did not have a garden or any sort of yard used significantly less water than those areas where residents preferred to live on quarter-acre blocks.

North and south bathe in liquid gold

Would you like to have a long shower without feeling guilty about wasting water?

Are you pining for the days when you could water your garden any time without worrying if your house was an odd or even number?

Then it's time pack your bags and head to Darwin and Hobart, the only two capital cities that have moved into spring with their water storages brimming.

While Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra struggle under the ongoing drought and a dry August, our northern and southern-most capitals remain free of any water restrictions.

A new snapshot of the nation's urban water use, due to be released next week, reveals:

DARWINIANS are the most profligate water users, each soaking up almost 170,000 litres a year.

BRISBANE residents are the most water conscious, each using 73,500 litres of water a year, followed by Melburnians (75,000 litres) and Sydneysiders (75,100 litres).

SYDNEY now uses the same amount of water it did in 1974, even though it has an extra one million people.

ANNUAL water consumption in urban Australia fell from 86,000 litres per person in 2004-05 to 83,000 litres per person in 2005-06, a fall of 3.3 per cent.

THE average annual water consumption in urban homes fell from 226,000 litres in 2004-05 to 213,000 litres in 2005-06, a 6 per cent decrease.

The snapshot has been prepared by the Water Services Association of Australia, the peak body of the nation's urban water industry. The report, which compares the level of water restrictions in capital cities, conservation programs, pricing issues and new infrastructure plans, also warns that the public is growing uneasy about declining storage levels. It said that a lack of rain in many urban catchments in the past year had created "a new level of fear" in the community.

WSAA executive director Ross Young said worry about climate change was the cause of growing concerns over water reliability in most parts of Australia.

"Although Australian cities have experienced dry and highly variable weather patterns before, this particular dry period is the first time the spectre of climate change has hung over our heads," he said.

"This has introduced a sense of fear in the community that Australia may never return to the rainfall patterns of the past."

Mr Young said the problem was exacerbated by the continued rapid growth in Australian cities.

He said the country's major urban areas were expected to grow by an extra 8.5 million people by 2050.

SA Democrats

LIBERAL PLAN IGNORES MURRAY & COUNTRY

The Liberals water plan ignores most of country South Australia and the Murray says Democrats MP Sandra Kanck.

"I have long argued that we must wean Adelaide off the Murray and I am pleased that the Liberals are highlighting Mike Rann's inaction on water.

'But the mid-North is the only country area mentioned in the Liberals plan.

'We need urgent action now to save the Murray and look after all the communities in the Riverland and around the Murray mouth.

'Martin-Hamilton Smith needs to get on the phone to John Howard and get him to start spending the \$3b allocated for water buybacks in the PM's National Water Plan.

'That water can be used to keep permanent plantings like grapes and citrus alive and put water back in the Murray.

'And small farmers and irrigators will benefit from an injection of funds.

'The Murray Darling Basin Commission closed the Living Murray buyback two months early because irrigators responded so strongly to the chance to sell their water so we know that people want to sell.

'And even if the water is not there now the Government should be buying up allocations for when the rain comes.

'The buyback will keep the river and country Australia alive while we work on a longer-term response.

'We all know that if you can't manage water you can't manage South Australia. Mr. Rann has failed that test.

'Martin Hamilton-Smith is making progress but until he comes up with a plan for the Murray and the country he will be stuck on his environmental L-plates' said Ms Kanck.

Carbon plan

A project aimed at developing Australia's first zero-emission coal-fired power station has shown that central Queensland's coal and gas fields can safely store greenhouse gas underground.

Adelaide Advertiser

**PETITION: Gardeners sa drip irrigation address our water problems more efficiently than using buckets
Restrictions that are based on 'ignorance'**

2nd

news.com.au

APEC opens with \$70m giveaway

Prime Minister John Howard has announced \$70 million in international climate change initiatives on the first day of the APEC summit in Sydney.

Mr Howard said Australia would contribute \$50 million to the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate. The funding will be used in various projects to develop and deploy cleaner, more efficient technologies. The \$50 million will add to \$100 million which was announced in January last year and has already been committed to 63 regional projects.

Another \$15.7 million will go towards the Asia Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program to assist regional countries to improve the ability of their forests to capture and store carbon dioxide.

The Federal Government will also spend \$5 million to set up the Asia Pacific Network for Energy Technology which will improve linkages between researchers in the region working on low-emissions energy and energy-efficient technologies.

APEC talks

Climate change initiatives were expected to be prominently on the agenda for APEC leaders when they meet at the end of the week. However a forum to be hosted by US President George W. Bush later this month was widely seen as stealing APEC's thunder and making a sweeping commitment less likely to be unveiled at this summit. A UN convention will also be held in Bali in December.

A draft leaders' declaration ahead of the APEC meeting leaked last month proposes aspirational goals to cut energy use by at least 25 per cent by 2030 and strategies to curb deforestation.

Mr Howard said Australia had to be realistic on what would be achieved on climate change during APEC.

"We won't reach agreement nor do we imagine for a moment that we could reach agreement on binding targets amongst the member countries of APEC," he said.

"The developing countries have made that clear and for very understandable reasons. But we can reach a framework agreement, if we work hard enough, on the shape of a post-Kyoto approach to the international response to climate change.

"That is also a recognition that different countries come to their contributions to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in different ways."

Missed chance

Labor has said that Mr Howard must win commitments from APEC leaders to binding emissions targets and joining the United Nations process on climate change, or he will have missed a golden opportunity to genuinely address the issue.

"Mr Howard's got himself in a bind here because he again set the bar very high," Opposition environment spokesman Peter Garrett said.

"(He must get) agreement from world leaders at this APEC conference to both commit to the UN process ... and to commit to binding targets, not aspirational targets."

Fan club

Earlier, Mr Garrett said he was "not a great fan" of Mr Bush and his policies, particularly those concerning climate change which had "held the world back".

Asked for his reaction to Mr Garrett's comments, Mr Howard said: "President Bush is the democratically elected president of the United States ... of our most important ally.

"I thought Mr Garret's comments indicated the deep tension within the Labor party regarding the American alliance."

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd, however, has repeatedly said a Labor government would not weaken Australia's alliance with the US.

Recycled water like champagne, Beattie says

Premier Peter Beattie today tasted the first recycled water produced in Queensland - and reckoned it was like drinking "champagne".

He was officially opening Stage 1A of the Bundamba Advance Water Treatment Plant - one of the Government's key water infrastructure projects - which will deliver recycled water to Swanbank Power Station, west of Brisbane. After swilling down a sample produced by the plant, Mr Beattie declared it "champagne water".

"This recycled water is as good as any drinking water people have ever had and perhaps even better," he said.

Water produced by the plant will eventually be pumped into Brisbane's main drinking supply, Wivenhoe Dam, through the Government's recycled water pipeline.

Deputy Premier and Infrastructure Minister Anna Bligh said the pipeline was on track to provide water to the dam by December next year.

Wivenhoe is currently at about 20 per cent capacity following heavy rains in August, with further downpours expected this week.

However, Mr Beattie said drought-breaking rain would not negate the dam useless, saying it would drought-proof the state.

"We want to be in a position with the construction of this water grid where we never have to worry about it again, that's why recycled water and desalination are absolutely crucial."

Water waste blame

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald has blamed wasteful householders for the introduction of bucket watering. Launching a stinging attack on critics of tough new garden bans, Ms Maywald said householders had been given a chance to prove they could responsibly use drip irrigation during Level 3 restrictions last summer – and failed.

"People were using sprinklers for the period allowed whether their gardens needed them or not, which was a waste of water," she said.

As a result, Ms Maywald said gardeners could not be trusted to control their drip-watering as the drought bites harder this summer. She revealed Adelaide's reservoirs now held only nine months of water supply for "critical urban needs", including drinking, showering and washing – and restrictions would tighten if the drought continued as expected.

"If drips were not banned, people would put them on during the prescribed times whether they needed to or not," Ms Maywald said.

She acknowledged drip irrigation was an efficient watering method if not abused. But Ms Maywald said the physical effort involved in filling a bucket, as opposed to simply turning a tap, would lead to far greater water savings, saying: "It is terribly inconvenient using buckets and watering cans and therefore people will use less water."

"With buckets being difficult to use, people won't be over-watering."

The ban on drip irrigation, enacted on July 1, has erupted into a public debate this week as householders and the nursery industry revolt against being forced to use buckets to keep their gardens alive.

Thousands of gardeners have signed petitions at nurseries calling for the ban to be scrapped on the basis drip irrigation is far more efficient than bucket watering.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said: "There is no sense, there is no science, there is only sadness in the water policy."

Nursery and Garden Industry of SA industry development officer Cameron Baldock said: "With the use of timers – which we're encouraging the Government to make compulsory for drip irrigation – this system is a long-term solution to our water supply problems.

"Drip irrigation is much more efficient use of water than buckets or watering cans."

South Australian Farmers Federation president Wayne Cornish said rural people were bemused by the raging debate over drippers and buckets.

"City people are talking about a quality of life with their lawns and gardens while country people are talking about life itself," Mr Cornish said yesterday.

River Murray irrigators said the debate to drip or not to drip was missing the point.

"Adelaide residents should sit down and think about the crisis our state is currently experiencing with our water shortage and ask themselves – do we want drinking water and water for food or are our gardens more important,"

SA Murray Irrigators chairman Ian Zadow said.

"The prospect of a brown lawn for householders is a real possibility under Adelaide water restrictions – but they will still go to work on Monday morning. "In the next two months, however, food growers will be walking off their farms unable to keep their production going.

"Regional towns along the Murray River are experiencing oncoming water shortages which will have huge impacts.

"The food-growing industry can look at not planting their vegetable crops or watching their fruit trees die.

"Unemployment will increase as food processing factories collapse and there will be little or no water to maintain ovals and parks.

"Do we use a bucket or hose on the garden? Well it doesn't matter. The question is how do we best use our water for the whole of the state."

SA Water said ban exemptions were available for physically incapacitated people and the elderly. Almost 10,000 Adelaide householders have been granted an exemption from existing water bans, according to SA Water.

Latest figures show Adelaide reservoirs are at 75 per cent capacity.

"Which means we have less than nine months of water supply for Adelaide," Ms Maywald said.

"We can't rely on rainfall in the Adelaide Hills catchment and if we are unable to get water from the Murray-Darling, then we can't guarantee getting water into Adelaide homes next year."

Brisbane householders have been living with a ban on sprinklers and drip irrigators since September 2005.

"And gardens died as a result," South East Queensland Water Authority public affairs manager Mike Foster said.

"We got flak from the nursery industry and some people with large gardens complained but – although the general community weren't happy – people supported the ban because it was about ensuring we had drinking water."

The community support was evident in the fall in water consumption over the first 14 months of the bans being in place, Mr Foster said.

The Australian

Low-emission technology strategy 'urgent'

Companies that have been influential in changing the Australian Government's mind about climate change have warned that urgent development of national low-emission technology strategy is required to complement a national emissions trading scheme.

The Australian Business & Climate Group (ABCG) said an emissions trading system by itself would fail to drive the investment in technology needed to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The group comprises Deloitte, Anglo Coal, BP, Mirvac, Rio Tinto, Santos, Swiss Re, VicSuper and Westpac. While it is the first time they have joined together on climate change, some ABCG members were among the original companies to challenge the conventional wisdom in the resources sector that greenhouse gas emission targets would damage industry.

In a report published yesterday, the group said an emissions trading system needed to be accompanied by a broader strategy to support low-emission technologies for climate targets to be met.

"The rate of technology improvement and subsequent adoption must be faster than the usual commercial timeframes if these technologies are to be available at scale, performance and at an acceptable cost when required to meet challenging emission trajectories," the report said.

It was released ahead of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation forum leaders' summit next week in Sydney, which is expected to deliver an "aspirational" declaration that the 21 APEC member countries will look at measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

Industry leaders had been hoping that APEC countries would agree to move towards emissions trading systems, particularly in China.

But at this stage it appears APEC will allow Australia to go it alone.

Prime Minister John Howard said in June that the Government was working towards an emissions trading scheme in 2011 or 2012 with the aim of setting a greenhouse gas reduction target next year.

The Government is proposing to establish a price cap for carbon in the initial phase of the system, a proposal which has critics questioning the effectiveness of the plan.

Yesterday the nine members of the ABCG said that they strongly supported the introduction of an emissions trading scheme

but it would not work without a national low-emission technology strategy.

"While a carbon price is essential, it alone will not drive the required level of investment to transform Australia's energy landscape," the report said.

The Australian emissions system needs to have "a credible and rising carbon price signal linked to a long-term emissions target", it added. The broader strategy needed to include national risk assessment, an energy security policy, forestry, water and land policies and international co-operation. Those policies would help emerging technologies such as hot rock geothermal and carbon capture and storage to avoid falling into the "technology valley of death" because of market and regulatory barriers. The report said it was critical that Australia sought solutions on a national basis, rather than state by state.

Sunday Mail

Minister tips buckets on city

Life more important than lawns: Irrigators

Maywald: How I see our plight

Nurseries count the cost

3rd

adelaide.now.com

Labor MPs back water drippers

Labor backbenchers are urging State Cabinet to overturn a ban on watering with drippers to defuse public anger at Adelaide's harsh water restrictions.

Some MPs are insisting Cabinet overturn the ban as early as today, arguing the present policy cannot be sustained because of the inefficiency and inconvenience of watering only with buckets. Under Level 3 restrictions, gardens in South Australia can only be watered using buckets. The State Government policy has sparked widespread condemnation, particularly from home gardeners and the nursery industry.

But a senior Labor source said yesterday Cabinet would resist making any decision based on politics alone, saying any relaxation on the use of drippers would come about only as a result of a change in policy on a national level.

"My understanding is none of this is going to be done on politics," the source said.

"It is all being run by policy now and it will only be changed on policy."

Such a policy change could occur by the middle of this month, when the next Murray-Darling Basin Dry Inflow Contingency Planning report is agreed to by the Prime Minister and the Premiers of SA, Victoria and NSW.

Some Labor backbenchers, speaking on condition of anonymity, believed the Government would soon change the bucket-only watering policy.

"Whether they do it this week or next, I don't know when, but it can't last, what we're doing," the MP said yesterday.

A senior Labor source said it would come as no surprise if the drip-watering ban was lifted soon. "There are certain Labor backbenchers who are not happy, they can't go out publicly, but they know the Government can't win this argument about buckets over drippers," the source said.

"The Premier is a pretty smart operator, he knows when he's winning an argument and when he isn't."

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith yesterday sought to highlight inconsistencies in Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald's public statements, demanding she apologise to South Australians "for her extraordinary accusation that they can't be trusted".

"Today, Water Minister Karlene Maywald claimed householders wasted water during last summer's Level 3 water restrictions by carrying out unnecessary watering on their gardens," he said. But in March this year, the same Minister claimed the Level 3 restrictions were a success. "She's lost the plot."

A spokeswoman for Ms Maywald yesterday said watering curbs were being monitored on a month-by-month basis.

Heyne's Nursery employee Sarah Macdonald yesterday said a petition circulating at garden centres to convince the State Government to allow drip irrigation was attracting thousands of signatures. She said the petition would be handed to State Parliament on September 10.

EDITORIAL

MPs feel the heat as water anger simmers

Premier Mike Rann must listen to the growing dissent from within his own backbench over the direction of his government's water policy.

Labor's backbenchers are feeling the political heat from public confusion over the ban on drippers.

Importantly, they are also being confronted with public frustration at the absence of any long-term plan to supplement Adelaide's dwindling water supplies.

This public anger has been spurred by unseasonably warm and dry conditions in the final days of winter.

These conditions resulted in the earliest total fire bans in the state's history on Thursday last week.

While mains water use is restricted, those fortunate enough to have bores are contributing to the substantial depletion of Adelaide's groundwater reserves.

However, they cannot be blamed for using legitimate means in a bid to keep their gardens alive and fresh. It seems the State Government's long-term strategy for the state's water supply has been to pray for rain while tinkering around the edges.

This has resulted in the imposition of harsh water restrictions as a means of conserving existing supplies.

Generally, these restrictions have been well accepted by homeowners, who understand the importance of conservation.

But there are frustrating inconsistencies, such as the ban on use of drippers while at the same time not restricting water use inside the house.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald is abreast of policy detail but has not come to terms with the political side of her job.

This failure to convince the public of the necessity of key details of the water restriction regime represents a significant headache for Mr Rann and his Cabinet.

It is compounded by the Government's failure to convince the public that it has a viable strategy to safeguard water supplies for the state and Adelaide, in particular.

Mr Rann has backed a desalination plant at Port Bonython to supply the proposed Olympic Dam expansion, Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula. But this project stemmed from the mine's forecast demand.

There has been talk from the Government of a desalination plant for Adelaide and appropriate investigations are continuing.

Yet it is hard to escape the perception that too little is being done too late to deal with a problem that was becoming obvious years ago - that the River Murray can no longer be relied on to supply Adelaide's water.

Adelaide.now.au

Govt silent as water anger simmers

The State Government has remained silent today on the issue of water restrictions as public anger over the bucket-only watering policy shows no signs of diminishing.

Despite the issue being widely expected to dominate this morning's State Cabinet meeting, the Government said there would be no announcement or statement after Cabinet had finished meeting.

Some Labor backbenchers have been reported as urging Cabinet to overturn the highly unpopular policy and allow drip watering, which home gardeners and the nursery industry argue is more a more efficient and water conserving method.

10

Speaking on ABC radio this morning, independent Upper House MP Ann Bressington said she would seek legislative change so water restrictions could be debated in Parliament.

Ms Bressington said she would draft an amendment to the Water Corporations Act, allowing Upper House MPs to debate whether to review or change the current restrictions.

"We will have a process where the Upper House will be involved in the debate on water restrictions and that will give the Upper House the opportunity to hear the science and the evidence and therefore debate it, so we have water restrictions that are solid and are effective," she said.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith, meanwhile, has sought to keep the pressure on Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald by holding a press conference on the steps of Parliament House this afternoon.

The state Liberal leader told reporters Ms Maywald's ministerial position was "looking increasingly untenable".

"Back in March she was lording the success of water restrictions," he said.

"She was telling people that they had saved thousands upon thousands of megalitres of water with drippers and hoses with a nozzle.

"On the weekend she came out and slammed the people of SA and told them that they were wrong.

"The Water Minister needs to go back and read rule 101 in politics – which is it's about having faith in people if you expect them to have faith in you."

A senior Labor source said yesterday Cabinet would resist making any decision to overturn the ban on watering with drippers based on politics alone, saying any relaxation on their use would come about only as a result of a change in policy on a national level.

"My understanding is none of this is going to be done on politics," the source said.

"It is all being run by policy now and it will only be changed on policy."

Such a policy change could occur by the middle of this month, when the next Murray-Darling Basin Dry Inflow Contingency Planning report is agreed to by the Prime Minister and the Premiers of SA, Victoria and NSW.

Some Labor backbenchers, speaking on condition of anonymity, believed the Government would soon change the bucket-only watering policy.

"Whether they do it this week or next, I don't know when, but it can't last, what we're doing," the MP said yesterday.

A senior Labor source said it would come as no surprise if the drip-watering ban was lifted soon. "There are certain Labor backbenchers who are not happy, they can't go out publicly, but they know the Government can't win this argument about buckets over drippers," the source said.

"The Premier is a pretty smart operator, he knows when he's winning an argument and when he isn't."

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith yesterday sought to highlight inconsistencies in Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald's public statements, demanding she apologise to South Australians "for her extraordinary accusation that they can't be trusted".

"Today, Water Minister Karlene Maywald claimed householders wasted water during last summer's Level 3 water restrictions by carrying out unnecessary watering on their gardens," he said.

"But in March this year, the same Minister claimed the Level 3 restrictions were a success.

"She's lost the plot."

A spokeswoman for Ms Maywald yesterday said watering curbs were being monitored on a month-by-month basis.

Heyne's Nursery employee Sarah Macdonald yesterday said a petition circulating at garden centres to convince the State Government to allow drip irrigation was attracting thousands of signatures.

She said the petition would be handed to State Parliament on September 10.

AWA

The Western Australian Government has called for expressions of interest to recycled water service providers to build, operate and manage an integrated water system for a residential development in Gracetown. (Including sewage and recycled water systems), opening the supply of water services to the private sector.

The Issues Paper for Review of Prices for Sydney Water Corporation's water, sewerage, stormwater and recycled water, for the period from 1 July 2008 has been released by IPART for comment.

Draft terms of reference have been released for the Environmental Impact Statement process for the proposed \$345 million GLADSTONE - FITZROY PIPELINE PROJECT, part of the proposed Stanwell - Gladstone Infrastructure Corridor. The Gladstone Area Water Board plans to build a 110km water pipeline to transfer 30, 000 GL of water from the lower Fitzroy River to the Gladstone State Development Area.

Irrigation Australia Limited is a new peak body for Australia's irrigation industry, formed as a result of the merger of the Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (ANCID) and Irrigation Association of Australia (IAA).

11

Preliminary data from the WICD Interaction with Universities survey revealed that water businesses surveyed interacted with 27 of the 39 Australian universities. More respondents interacted with Griffith University than any other. Of the activities listed in the survey, the majority of interactions centred on employing graduates. Relatively few interactions occurred in regard to providing advice on course content.

South Australia's second desalination plant was opened last week in Marion Bay on Yorke Peninsula. The \$500,000 plant, which will supply the town with 46KL of water per day, was funded by local council.

Data from the ABS publication 'Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators, 2007' reported that in the year ending June 2005 about 1% of Australia's 340 Surface Water management areas were over allocated and a further 13% were developed to a high level. This proportion was greater for the 367-groundwater management units, where 5% were over allocated, and a further 23% had a high level of development.

Essential Services Commission (Vic) commences a review of prices to apply to water and sewerage services provided by Victoria's 20 water businesses for the second regulatory period. Each water business is required to submit a water plan for the 5-year period from 1 July 2008. The Commission expects these plans will be formally submitted by 8 October after a period of public consultation.

An independent engineering report by SMEC, commissioned after protesters and Federal MPs claimed the controversial Traveston Crossing Dam would leak, was poorly designed and would encounter high evaporation rates, backed the Queensland Government's plans for the dam. Geological tests and an examination of the \$1.7 billion dam's design showed the risk of leakage was "insignificant".

ACTEW is inviting interested companies to a briefing on the implementation of infrastructure projects including: Enlarged Cotter Dam, Water Purification Scheme (treatment, pumping and wetland) and the Murrumbidgee Water Extraction (weir/pumping station and pipeline).

A contract has been signed for the Replacement Flows Project, part of the \$250 million Western Sydney Recycled Water Initiative which will provide 27 GL of recycled water a year for the environment, industry, irrigation and new homes in Western Sydney.

The continuing dry conditions and poor rainfall across Melbourne's water supply catchments again this week have seen storages rise just 0.2% (4,130 million litres) over the week to 38.6% (684,759 million litres). Stage 3 water restrictions remain in place.

Site establishment and marine survey activities will soon commence at Sydney's desalination plant site at Kurnell. The development moves to its next phase this week, after the DG of the Department of Planning approved construction management plans to allow major construction to proceed.

Scotland's drinking water quality regulator has revealed that complaints about the country's water rose by 12% last year, despite quality continuing to improve and most were about colour, although 99.7% of samples met European standards. The regulator ascribed the colour to highly peaty waters in the Northwest and iron sediments from deteriorating cast-iron mains in other areas.

London's mayor described plans to build a c200m desalination plant as "a disgrace", as he contests a government decision to back the plan and calls for leaks to be fixed instead. Thames Water aims to build the plant near Beckton, East London, to produce water during droughts or low rainfall.

In a Conference on sustainable sewerage held in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Zhao Baojiang, chairman of the China association of city planning said that, at the end of 2005, 278 cities across the country had no sewage treatment facilities, including eight with a population of more than 500,000.

Recycled water guidelines (Phase 1) Non-potable reuse guidelines documents soon to be available in hardcopy. If interested contact Peter R. Smith 0418 822 342

Call for Papers! Accounting for Carbon in the Water Industry Workshop, 27-28 February 2008. An opportunity to show what your utility, your department or your enterprise has done or plans to do to manage the necessary adjustments associated with GHG accounting and climate variability.

Drought-hit Southeast Queensland could be in for more rain after a record drenching over the last month, commercial weather forecaster Weatherzone says.

12

According to both state and federal ministers, an auction to sell 8000ML of water from the fragile Warrego River on the Queensland border should be put on hold by the Queensland Government as the decision to auction predated the passing of the commonwealth's \$10bn water bill.

Water restrictions in SA have attracted publicity beyond the state borders.

Sydneysiders could expect a slight difference in the smell and taste of their tap water as a blue green algae bloom continues to grow in Warragamba Dam following recent heavy downpours and unseasonably warm temperatures.

4th

FarmOnline

Temporary water prices surge past \$1000/ML

Both temporary and permanent water prices have surged in recent weeks as desperate farmers seek to keep permanent plantings alive in the hope that rain will soon fall.

According to South Australian-based water brokers, Waterfind, the price of temporary water has surged past \$1000 a megalitre on its National Water Index.

This is up from \$150/ML in July.

But in a reflection of the scarcity of supply - average temporary water allocations are 25pc nationally - and the impact of the drought on cash flows, there have been very few trades conducted at this price, according to Waterfind.

Prices vary from region to region, however Waterfind is reporting rates in the following ranges:

* Permanent water - \$2000-\$2400/ML (high security) and

* temporary/carryover water - \$850-\$1000/ML.

But for those willing to pay such high rates for temporary water to plug the gap until the spring rains arrive, the Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting just 50:50 odds of a wetter than average spring for most of Australia.

In the lower reaches of the Murray Darling Basin, the probability falls to just 40pc.

But in Western Australia's wheatbelt, the odds are better than even for a wet spring.

Vic water allocations get a boost

Goulburn-Murray Water has today boosted allocations for the Goulburn system this season from 15pc to 17pc for high-reliability water.

GMW lifted allocations on the back of continued moderate inflows to Lake Eildon and tipped allocations would rise to close to 70pc by December under average weather conditions.

Under dry conditions irrigators would still likely receive 37pc of allocation by December.

But high-reliability water allocations for the Murray are unchanged at 5pc.

Irrigators in the Campaspe, Loddon and Bullarook Creek systems are yet to receive any irrigation allocation due to low water resources.

GMW said significantly wetter than average inflow conditions were needed to meet full-season commitments and provide allocations for the remainder of the season in the Campaspe and Bullarook Creek systems.

SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, Victoria, posting breaking news updates on *FarmOnline*.

Horse Flu: Water restrictions waived in Qld's flu areas

The Queensland Government's level five water restrictions currently in place in south east Queensland have been lifted in the quarantine zones established to contain equine influenza.

The Queensland Water Commission has today advised water restrictions do not apply to reasonable actions taken to prevent material risks associated with a hazard to health, which applies to the current outbreak of horse flu.

Biosecurity Queensland says negotiations are underway for a possible resumption of racing within Queensland, but says tight biosecurity provisions will have to be met.

One of the conditions that would apply is that no public be able to attend the races.

It is also considering whether to establish zonal quarantine areas, with horses in EI-free areas able to race within that zone.

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

Water worries? Contact the bank, says NFF

The National Farmers' Federation and the Australian Bankers' Association are together encouraging farmers – especially those still awaiting winter rains – to keep in contact with their bank if they are concerned about their financial circumstances.

The NFF and ABA have been in regular contact throughout the prolonged drought, discussing farmers' circumstances, and have also been briefing Federal and State Governments on the status of the agricultural sector. The NFF and ABA are encouraging farmers to maintain close communication with their bank to ensure that their circumstances are geared to derive the best possible outcomes – now and with a view to the future.

13

NFF president, David Crombie, says inconsistent winter rains have been a concern to farmers relying on a solid crop to meet their financial commitments and rebuild for post-drought conditions.

"We are reassured by the banking sector taking a strategic, sensible and sensitive approach to farmers who find themselves in the grip of the worst drought on record," Mr Crombie said.

"According to ABARE, debt derived from bank lending to agriculture, fishing and forestry has risen from almost \$27 billion at the end of financial year 2001-02, to over \$43B at the end of the 2005-06 financial year – an increase of over 60pc.

"It is important to note that ABARE has reported that while average farm debt has increased steadily in real terms since the mid-1990s, broadacre farmers have been able to maintain their equity in the farm business at close to 90pc owing to a strong rise in land values driven by steadily increasing demand for agricultural land."

The increasing demand for agricultural land has primarily been driven by farmers seeking to boost their productivity by increasing the scale of their operations.

Farmers have also been using debt to finance investment in new technology to improve their efficiency.

David Bell, chief executive of the ABA, said farm debt needs to be carefully managed on a case-by-case basis.

"Bearing in mind that each farm operation is structured differently and faces a diversity of conditions, farmers may wish to discuss loan options and risk management tools with their bank," Mr Bell said.

"Any farmer worried about the impact of the drought on their financial position should contact their bank, if they have not already done so."

Adelaide.now.com **River 'screams help'**

EXCLUSIVE: THE River Murray is about to reach salinity levels above accepted standards for drinking water and scientists say it is "screaming for help".

Official predictions show salinity levels in the Murray town of Morgan will as early as next month hit 1000EC, above World Health Organisation guidelines for desirable drinking water.

Irrigators and scientists are warning of disastrous consequences, but Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald insists the river will not be too salty to drink, saying the State Government has secured special flows to deal with salinity.

The predictions from the Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation Department will correspond with so-called "dilution" flows coming into South Australia.

Last month, *The Advertiser* reported that salinity levels at Morgan had doubled to 630EC in the previous year. Yesterday, the figure had jumped to 723EC.

Wentworth Group scientist Professor Mike Young said yesterday that a level beyond 1000EC exceeded the World Health Organisation's level for desirable drinking water quality.

"The River Murray is now in the worst state its ever been," he said.

"The river is now screaming for help . . . it's telling us that it's in strife."

In 1999, a Murray-Darling Basin Commission report predicted that by 2020, Murray salinity would hit 800EC, 200EC less than it is expected to reach within weeks.

CSIRO and primary industry experts have modelling showing a \$100 million economic loss for irrigators if Morgan reaches 1000EC, with high salt levels substantially reducing crop production.

At Mannum, which is near the pipeline that supplies Adelaide, the department's predictions show levels may go as high as 1300EC by January. Lake Alexandrina could reach more than 3000EC by mid next year.

Barmera irrigator Wayne Whateley is considering whether he should plant a crop at all or sell his allocation on a water market trading at record prices. "I've been growing stuff for over 40 years and never in my life have we sat down and said we're far better off to get rid of our water and grow nothing," he said.

The salinity predictions come as SA receives its lowest flows in living memory. While the annual average is around 4800GL, last year SA received just 1470GL. This year, the drought-affected flow could be even lower to a state where irrigators and householders are already under heavy-use restrictions.

Ms Maywald told *The Advertiser* yesterday that SA had "banked" 225GL of water for the dilution flows, following a June agreement with the Prime Minister and states.

Under the deal, SA will receive a quarter of the available water while the "interim water sharing arrangements" are in effect.

Ms Maywald confirmed the salinity levels would peak at 1000EC at Morgan before the dilution flows took effect.

Ms Maywald stressed Adelaide's drinking water was safe, with authorities having diverted water from the River Murray to reservoirs to guard against future water quality problems.

Govt in deep on water issue

The Advertiser's exclusive story about the River Murray's rapidly rising salinity levels has sparked debate among AdelaideNow readers as to who is at fault and what can be done to fix it.

14

Today's *Advertiser* revealed the River Murray is about to reach salinity levels above accepted standards for drinking water and scientists say it is "screaming for help".

Official predictions show salinity levels in the Murray town of Morgan will as early as next month hit 1000EC, above World Health Organisation guidelines for desirable drinking water.

Irrigators and scientists are warning of disastrous consequences.

The latest story is just a fragment of a greater problem facing South Australia, which is in the midst of drought and compelling the State Government to enforce unprecedented water restrictions.

Today, a petition to highlight "there is a need for a coherent and complete water infrastructure plan for all South Australia" was launched by Sturt MP and Minister for Ageing Christopher Pyne.

And an AdelaideNow poll detailing how bad readers thought the State Government, in particular Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald, had handled the water crisis painted a bleak picture for the State Government.

At 2pm, more than 50 per cent of the 800 voters said the Government had handled the water crisis with "incompetence" and with a "lack of vision" while another 24 percent were furious about the situation.

While not all people believed the State Government had mishandled the water crisis, one reader, responding to AdelaideNow's offer to pass on letters from readers to Mrs Maywald, summed up the situation.

"I am dismayed at the inaction of the State Government in its planning for water and its allocation to the residents of Adelaide," SE of Unley wrote.

"Mike Rann is missing in action, as is always the case when it's hot in the kitchen."

Catherine Wilkie of Mildura said her town was turning into a "desert".

"The vines are dying and blockies selling vineyards for the price of water, select a few treasured plants and bucket them with as much grey water as possible," she wrote.

"By summer Mildura will be a desert, we haven't had rain since May. We are also hurting."

Paul M of Adelaide posed some interesting mathematical equations.

"Mrs Maywald, it's my understanding that domestic use only accounts for eight per cent of the state's water usage and that only 35 per cent of this eight per cent is used on gardens," he blogged.

"So I don't understand how restricting what amounts to two to three per cent of the state's total water usage (35 per cent of 8 per cent) is going to address the issue?"

Not all readers were critical of the Government however. Peter of Ridgehaven congratulated Mrs Maywald on her measures.

"Good on you Karlene! The best Minister we've had for decades," he wrote.

"Stick to your guns and ignore those petty complainers who can't see the drastic water shortage for the trees of their own self interest."

Amid the growing anger, Mrs Maywald today played down the high salinity levels, saying River Murray water was not unsafe and dilution flows would help to manage further increases in salinity over coming months.

"The 800EC is the desirable drinking level - it's not a health issue at 1,200EC, and it's not a health issue at 1,500EC," Ms Maywald told ABC radio today.

"It's not a concern in regard to water for drinking until it gets much higher than that as far as health goes."

Adelaide Advertiser

SA restrictions 'crude' – Malcolm Turnbull

Reminder on water for shack owners

River Murray shack owners will be told not to waste water by government compliance officers in the run-up to summer. **What a lot of crap: all extractions should/must be metered.**

SHOWGROUND: Plan to catch 3.5 million litres per year

We can save 30pc of water for the future; The Adelaide Showgrounds plans to catch 3.5 million litres of water each year in a 5000 square meter underground water tank in a bis to guarantee future water supplies.

TALK: Public revolt brews over water limits

More than 400 people telephoned or faxed Michael Keelan's gardening show on Fiveaa on Sunday morning. Their overwhelming concern was water and, particularly, the present regime of water restrictions.

If Premier Mike Rann had been listening he would have cringed. The problem was magnified when the Water Security Minister, Karlene Maywald, in a report in the *Sunday Mail*, blamed wasteful householders for the restrictions. She said gardeners could not be trusted to control even drip-watering of their gardens.

This was a tactical blunder, the trip-wire which enraged responsible home gardeners. Water has become the most contentious challenge this Government has faced in its 5 1/2 years in office.

A small but vocal group of home garden nursery operators and a couple of radio garden show hosts opposed to the restrictions are threatening to undermine the Government's stability and popularity. They are a powerful and persuasive lobby group. They have caught the public mood. If a state election was scheduled for later this year, the Government would be in trouble.

15

I know nothing about Mr Keelan's politics, but if the Liberals recruited him for a marginal Labor seat he would have a real chance of winning.

Domestic gardening does not follow political philosophy. Nor is it restricted by electoral boundaries. It is personal and emotional. People are passionate about their gardens. Often they have a sentimental attachment to their plot. They may have built their garden from barren earth.

I have some sympathy for the Government's position. Last week in this column I wrote that it was imposing unpalatable water restrictions which should have been implemented 25 years ago. "The present Government, the blameless victim of generational neglect, national drought and an infuriatingly dry winter, has been forced to apply water restrictions to prevent rationing and even broken supply," I wrote.

All that is true. And if the Government scrapped the water restrictions, people in Melbourne and Sydney, experiencing similar water problems, would rightly be incensed. But if Michael Keelan's program on Sunday is any guide, the public clearly doesn't agree.

People lured into the garden by a fine September weekend realised there wasn't much they could do without water. Using a garden hose, even a water-saving dripper system, is illegal. Dragging buckets and watering cans from the tap to soften hard ground is no fun.

People are being made to feel guilty. Placid, law-abiding folk are wondering, with some concern, whether they are breaking the law when they potter in their backyards. They peep suspiciously over the side fence at their neighbours' green lawns. We are becoming a society of backyard spies and doblers.

Fair or not, the Government is getting the blame. The Opposition is tut-tutting in step with the public mood. It argues that a desalination plant must be built, that surface water must be harvested and that domestic water tanks must be installed.

The public likes what it's hearing. The Government gives the impression of doing nothing but praying for rain. It was a reasonable strategy at the beginning of winter but by the beginning of spring it has lost its appeal.

This has opened the Government's wider record of achievement to scrutiny. Politically, water has become a lightning rod for other grievances.

The Government had better quickly come up with genuine solutions, or radio talkback anger could turn to something far more dangerous and damaging.

Plug into the facts on usage

*SA Water says 65 per cent of its supply is used by households and 40 per cent of that is used in gardens.

*It advises people attempting to grow vegetables to let nature do the watering and use mulch to keep the moisture in.

*Sprinklers and other watering systems are banned "during this time when rainfall should be sufficient to keep lawns alive".

*Buckets and watering cans can be used on trees, shrubs and outdoors plants.

*Grey water can be dispersed either by buckets or hoses.

*Permits allowing the use of a hand-held hose are available to people who cannot carry buckets or watering cans because of age or physical disability.

*No restrictions apply to indoor use of water, although people are asked to use water sparingly.

5th

FarmOnLine

APEC: PM amends climate ambitions

Prime Minister John Howard is having to amend his expectations of what APEC will achieve on climate change as nations struggle to reach agreement on how to tackle global warming.

Mr Howard may not fulfil his ambition of having leaders set "inspirational" targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the time the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders' summit finishes on Sunday.

There have been expectations they would issue a statement agreeing to non-binding targets which would see emissions cut by up to 25pc.

However, now it appears consensus on that goal is slipping away.

A senior US official, who did not wish to be named, told reporters that APEC nations were nowhere near agreement on the issue.

He stressed any suggestion that "inspirational" targets were agreed upon was premature.

"We're still negotiating what that statement's going to look like, nothing's been agreed on," he said.

Officials will be in discussions over the next two days to reach a position they can put to leaders but there are growing signs of a gulf developing between the US and Australia, on one side, and developing countries, led by China, on the other.

Some Asian countries are annoyed at what they see as Mr Howard hijacking APEC, which traditionally focuses on economic issues, to discuss climate change, a move that was supported by US President George W Bush.

16

International news agency AFP has reported another senior official as saying that the climate change negotiations would be "bloody".

The US official said his country was prepared for a "full and frank" discussion.

Mr Howard was today playing down the prospect of any major movement on climate change at APEC but said it didn't mean the meeting would be a total failure.

"Nobody is arguing that you can fix the climate change issue at the APEC meeting in Sydney, I have never argued that," he told reporters.

Mr Howard labelled Labor as unrealistic for demanding that binding targets be set for reducing emissions.

He says he believes having the three biggest polluters in the world present at APEC - the US, China and Russia - will make it a useful forum.

"You never solve all the world's problems at one meeting and it's always a mistake to say that unless this meeting achieves A, B or C it's a total failure," he told the Nine Network.

"If we can get some consensus on a way forward on climate change out of a body including America, Russia and China, that's a huge step forward."

Leaders are also keen to use APEC to breathe life into dying world trade talks.

Mr Howard hopes APEC can put a "bunsen burner" under the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations to liberalise trade, particularly in the areas of agriculture and manufactured goods.

WTO director general, Pascal Lamy, who will be at the meeting, is expected to help provide momentum on finding a way to move the negotiations forward.

The Associated Press has reported that APEC leaders would push for Doha to enter its final phase by the end of the year.

Mr Howard said he doubted they would lay down a strict timetable.

"But APEC is a marvellous forum for the world trading community to be reminded of the importance of the Doha round," he told reporters.

US Trade Representative Susan Schwab told AAP that APEC was coming at a critical juncture for the Doha round. Talks will resume in Geneva this week on draft proposals for liberalising markets for agriculture and industrialised goods.

Ms Schwab said no one expected to "solve" Doha at APEC.

"But the meeting here could really provide some impetus for us moving forward and that would be great," she said.

Ms Schwab was reluctant to set any kind of time frame to finalise the Doha negotiations.

SOURCE: AAP

Get the river environment 'off welfare benefits'

Applying a proper business approach to environmental flows and freeing up the rules for private ownership and management could play a key role in ensuring the long-term ecological sustainability of Australian rivers.

That's the view of Professor Gary Jones, CEO of eWater Cooperative Research Centre.

Professor Jones believes that, if governments continue to free up water trading markets, there are real opportunities to stimulate significant private investment in environmental flows.

Coupled with a more business-like approach to environmental stewardship, this could see huge gains for river ecosystems.

"That's something that is still eluding us in many rivers today," he said.

"It's time to start thinking of the river environment as a business.

"The business must operate on the same basis as irrigators, mining companies and power stations, raising its own investment funds and learning to be an efficient user of water.

"It is not a special case dependent solely on public hand-outs and public-sector management for survival"

"Allowing direct ownership of environmental water by private citizens and freeing up the rules for its use could change all this, with the dividend for investors being healthy populations of fish, frogs and birds.

"This is not about letting governments off the hook on environmental management.

"It is about increasing the pool of investment funds available for the environment and letting private citizens have a go at managing wetlands and river reaches too."

Professor Jones said these ideas were stimulated by the growing market for carbon offsets.

These allow people to invest in the health of the global environment by purchasing credits that fund green energy sources or new trees to soak up carbon.

SOURCE: Breaking national news from Rural Press weekly agricultural papers, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

NSW Murray Wetlands project wins \$100,000

A groundbreaking river management project initiated by the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group (MWWG) has won the \$100,000 National Thiess Riverprize – an award of high prestige and the largest award in its field. The Thiess Riverprize was announced during the 10th International River symposium and Environmental Flows Conference in Brisbane.

17

NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group chair, Howard Jones, said the project demonstrated how regional communities could achieve success in managing waterways and catchments.

“Since the group was established in 1992, it has delivered 75,000 megalitres of water to more than 200 wetlands across 71,000 hectares in the Murray and Lower Murray-Darling catchments,” Mr Jones said.

“The group developed a number of grant schemes to provide individual landowners, community groups and Government agencies with financial assistance to manage and rehabilitate natural wetlands.

"On-ground works included fencing, revegetation and minor earthworks to rehabilitate privately owned and public wetlands."

The group will use the prize money to continue managing and improving wetlands through on-ground works, education, community engagement and monitoring.

SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW, weekly rural newspaper, posting news updates daily on FarmOnline.

The Australian

Energy the 'biggest threat' to growth

High energy prices loom as the biggest threat to growth in the Asia-Pacific region, according to data released at the APEC summit. However, the report reveals that Australia's economy ranks as one of the most resilient to sharp rises in energy costs.

The Pacific Economic Co-operation Council's "State of the Region" survey of business, government, academic and media bodies found that 84 per cent of respondents ranked high energy prices as a threat to economic growth over the next three to five years.

But it would appear Australia is one of the countries with the least to fear, being ranked third-highest in energy security among APEC nations.

Only Peru and China had better ratings in terms of the impact a shock to energy prices would have on their national economic growth, while Vietnam, Indonesia and Mexico were ranked as the worst.

The resilience measure took account not only of dependence on energy imports but also the ability of the economy to adjust to changes in energy availability and prices by switching between energy sources or to generate new forms of energy.

Water pollution and shortages of water ranked as the second biggest hurdle to economic growth, with 79 per cent rating it as a threat, while global warming was cited by 74 per cent of respondents.

And while Prime Minister John Howard has sought to make global warming a central focus of this year's summit, survey respondents from Australia and New Zealand were the least concerned about the threat of global warming to economic growth, with only 62 per cent of respondents rating it as a long-term threat, well short of the 83 per cent incidence of concern among South American respondents.

Protectionism, a key issue in summit meetings as business leaders clamour for governments to push for a conclusion to the Doha round of free trade negotiations before the World Trade Organisation, was ranked as a threat by 74 per cent of respondents.

The Doha round ranked as the highest priority among government respondents, but business leaders ranked it second behind a regional free-trade agreement for the Asia-Pacific.

The survey findings seem to echo the frustration expressed by business leaders attending the APEC Business Advisory Council summit in Sydney that the Doha round is taking too long to finalise, leading them to push for an Asia-Pacific FTA in order to at least open trading opportunities within the region.

And in confirmation that APEC is still regarded as an unproductive talk-fest, "lack of commitment" to the issues under discussion was cited as the biggest challenge facing the summit, with 63 per cent of respondents listing it as a barrier to progress.

Australia left behind in fusion race

Scientists claim the nation has fallen further behind in the quest for safe cheap energy, as yet another international fusion project took a major step forward without Australian participation.

It was revealed on Monday that a British proposal to lead the next phase of the High Power Laser Fusion Research facility (HiPER) has been given the thumbs up by peer-reviewers for the European Commission (EC).

Fusion is the nuclear process that fuels the Sun and stars. If harnessed, it promises millions of years of cheap energy, with no greenhouse gas emissions, low levels of radioactive waste and no weapons proliferation potential.

This week's EC decision paves the way for a seven-year, £500 million (\$1227 million) program to construct an experimental fusion reactor within two decades, probably located in the UK.

The HiPER project is a consortium of seven European nations, including the UK.

“Either the rest of the world is stupid or Australia is missing something,” said Matthew Hole, a physicist with the Australian National University in Canberra.

He said HiPER followed the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, a collaboration of seven partners - Japan, China, India, South Korea, Russia, the US and the EU - working to build a trial electricity-generating fusion reactor in France within the decade.

18

Boyd Blackwell, director of the Australian Plasma Fusion Research Facility at ANU, claimed HiPER developments highlighted the need for Australia to explore a “variety” of forms of alternative energy.

“I think the problem in Australia is we've focussed solely on obvious alternative sources like solar energy and conventional nuclear fission,” he said.

Discovered in the 1930s by Australian physicist Mark Oliphant, fusion promises more energy than is needed for the nuclear reaction driving it. That involves fusing atoms of deuterium and tritium - types of hydrogen - under temperatures of about 100 million degrees C.

The Australian ITER forum, chaired by Dr Hole, was set up in 2004. It represents more than 130 scientists and engineers and is supported by seven universities, the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation and the Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering.

Last month, the group launched a plan calling for \$63 million over 10 years to allow Australian scientists to participate in the ITER consortium.

According to Dr Blackwell, roughly \$10 million would go towards the design and construction of instrumentation critical in monitoring the fusion reaction. Dr Hole added that benefits would spin-off to other areas of physics.

Climate change strategy backed

Japan thrown its support behind Australia's push for APEC to deliver a clear climate change strategy.

Alexander Downer yesterday met his Japanese counterpart, Nobutaka Machimura, ahead of today's meeting of regional foreign affairs and trade ministers.

A spokesman for the Japanese minister said he backed creating momentum on climate change at this year's APEC, adding that Australia's proposed target for improving energy efficiency by 25per cent by 2030 was a welcome step towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions.

"The Australian Government has been promoting in the context of APEC the idea of the improvement of energy efficiency," said the spokesman, Mitsuo Sakaba.

"In the context of Japan's proposal of Cool Earth 50 (cutting carbon emissions by 50per cent by 2050), energy efficiency constitutes a very important element as a step to reducing emissions of green house gas.

"We appreciate this kind of initiative and are quite willing to discuss this kind of subject. APEC can offer a very important framework for discussing that specific point proposed by Australia."

The talks with Japan were positive, with both countries agreeing to push ahead with a free trade agreement between the two nations, despite sensitivities around crucial issues such as agriculture.

Mr Downer told Mr Machimura that Australia would host the proposed "two by two" meetings between the foreign affairs and defence ministers of both nations next year.

Mr Machimura will join Mr Downer and Trade Minister Warren Truss today for the meeting of APEC foreign ministers and trade ministers. Tonight, Mr Downer and Mr Truss host an APEC ministers dinner at the Sydney Opera House.

On the eve of the gathering, Mr Downer yesterday met South Korean Foreign Minister Song Min-soon, with the conversation also dominated by climate change. Mr Downer also met Brunei Foreign Minister Prince Mohamed Bolkiah, Thai Foreign Minister Nitya Pibulsonggram and Canadian Foreign Minister Maxime Bernier.

Mr Downer said Australia had taken a leading role on the issue of climate change and was confident of overcoming Malaysian concerns about the push for a post-Kyoto agreement hijacking the APEC forum.

"Our discussions with officials over the last few months on the issue of climate change in the context of APEC have been extremely fruitful," he said.

"I think in the end Malaysia will agree with us that the issue of climate change is a very important issue and needs to be addressed and it needs to be addressed by the world community.

" Australia is part of the world and so is Malaysia, so is China and the United States, so that's all I'll say about it."

Japan and Australia plan to strengthen bilateral co-operation in the peaceful use of nuclear power, with Tokyo poised to secure a stable supply of uranium from Australia, which holds the world's biggest deposits.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and John Howard are planning to sign a document titled Australia-Japan Joint Statement for Enhanced Co-operation.

Premier vows to crush car-free day in city

Victorian Premier John Brumby has vowed to crush a move by Melbourne City Council to host a car-free day in the CBD.

The council's planning committee last night voted to examine the feasibility of a car-free day after five young environmentalists proposed the idea.

Councillor Fraser Brindley said the concept demonstrated the willingness of young people to make a difference in the community.

"It's a courageous idea from this group of young people who are willing to challenge conventional thinking on sustainable transport initiatives," he said.

19

But Mr Brumby said today the idea was a bad one and he would not allow it to happen on the city's roads, which are controlled by the state.

"I don't think the city would cope," Mr Brumby said.

"Melbourne is a global, cosmopolitan city. It's got a very vibrant commercial network and people need to be able to move freely in and out of the city and around the city, so we don't think it's a good idea," he said.

"It's not something that the State Government will support.

"Most of the roads which run through the city are state roads and that is not something that we would be supporting."

MPs feel the heat as water anger simmers

Premier Mike Rann must listen to the growing dissent from within his own backbench over the direction of his government's water policy.

Labor's backbenchers are feeling the political heat from public confusion over the ban on drippers.

Importantly, they are also being confronted with public frustration at the absence of any long-term plan to supplement Adelaide's dwindling water supplies.

This public anger has been spurred by unseasonably warm and dry conditions in the final days of winter.

These conditions resulted in the earliest total fire bans in the state's history on Thursday last week.

While mains water use is restricted, those fortunate enough to have bores are contributing to the substantial depletion of Adelaide's groundwater reserves.

However, they cannot be blamed for using legitimate means in a bid to keep their gardens alive and fresh. It seems the State Government's long-term strategy for the state's water supply has been to pray for rain while tinkering around the edges.

This has resulted in the imposition of harsh water restrictions as a means of conserving existing supplies.

Generally, these restrictions have been well accepted by homeowners, who understand the importance of conservation.

But there are frustrating inconsistencies, such as the ban on use of drippers while at the same time not restricting water use inside the house.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald is abreast of policy detail but has not come to terms with the political side of her job.

This failure to convince the public of the necessity of key details of the water restriction regime represents a significant headache for Mr Rann and his Cabinet.

It is compounded by the Government's failure to convince the public that it has a viable strategy to safeguard water supplies for the state and Adelaide, in particular.

Mr Rann has backed a desalination plant at Port Bonython to supply the proposed Olympic Dam expansion, Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula. But this project stemmed from the mine's forecast demand.

There has been talk from the Government of a desalination plant for Adelaide and appropriate investigations are continuing.

Yet it is hard to escape the perception that too little is being done too late to deal with a problem that was becoming obvious years ago - that the River Murray can no longer be relied on to supply Adelaide's water.

Fight climate change with a cheap Big Mac

A Japanese government website crashed today as people raced to take up an offer of a half-price McDonald's hamburger in exchange for pledging to fight global warming.

The Japanese unit of the US burger giant yesterday offered a Big Mac for ¥150 (\$1.58), about half the normal price, to anyone demonstrating a commitment to preventing climate change.

People were asked to check up to 39 boxes on a form they could download from the environment ministry's website, each listing a way of reducing carbon dioxide emissions blamed for global warming.

"We started seeing a rise in access yesterday and it surged this morning. We are now trying to restore the system," said Kenji Someno, who heads the ministry's Lifestyle Policy Office.

It was the ministry's first system crash following a corporate offer related to environmental efforts.

"McDonald's is such a familiar name with people and they eat there often. The Big Mac discount gives them the strong impression that it's a bargain," Mr Someno said.

McDonald's is one of more than 80 companies offering goods or other prizes to help the Government's drive to reduce greenhouse gases.

Despite being the home of the Kyoto Protocol, Japan is far behind in its requirement under the landmark treaty for cutting emissions by 6 percent by 2012 from 1990 levels amid a steady economic recovery.

The 39 measures range from cutting air conditioning use to reducing shower time by one minute to simply wiping water off the bottom of a kettle to save energy when heating it on a stove.

The ministry official said most hits on the website were just after 9am, indicating many people were thinking about Big Macs as they started work.

20

Grim warning for water use

I have, as well as many of my colleagues, been saying this for years!

South Australians need to drink recycled sewage, recycle stormwater and consume 50 per cent less to safeguard water supplies for the future, the Wentworth Group of Scientists says.

They have called for reliable sources to be established as a matter of urgency to replace SA's reliance on the River Murray.

The group's four water experts, University of Adelaide Professor Mike Young, former Adelaide Thinker in Residence Peter Cullen, University of Sydney Emeritus Professor Bruce Thom and CSIRO environmental adviser Peter Cosier have outlined several strategies.

The use of recycled wastewater and stormwater, limits on groundwater use, a buyback of water licences and an overall reduction in consumption was necessary.

Professor Young said all the options to source water must be examined.

"We need to put sewage recycling strongly on the table as an option, for both drinking and for outdoor use, and evaluate (all the options) carefully and thoroughly," he said.

Professor Cullen said 50 per cent of the water allocated from rivers would be less reliable as climate change took hold.

"We need to put controls on groundwater bores right across the Adelaide Plains," he said.

"We are pumping vast amounts out of our reserves when we might not have anything come out of the taps this summer."

Professor Thom said there was a "tremendous loss" when stormwater was being discharged out to sea.

Mr Cosier said State and Federal Government reforms to allocate water more stringently and sustainably had also failed to make progress in the past three years.

"One of the big criticisms SA had in the past was asking others to do what they weren't prepared to do themselves," he said.

Adelaide Advertiser

Wind farm code plan

The Federal Government has appointed a working group to create a National code for wind farms.

WATER: a state of emergency

A two page spread

Grim warning from experts – State has the worst incentives to save

Articles by: Professor Bruce Thomas, Peter Cosier, Professor Mike Young & Professor Peter Cullen.

RECYCLING: Everyone can help the environment

Running on green power

6th

The Australian

China holds key on climate change deal

China is standing in the way of John Howard's plan to forge a clear commitment to tackle climate change by improving energy efficiency among APEC nations.

Developing nations are resisting any commitment to binding climate change targets, such as cuts in greenhouse gas emissions.

And they could also veto any agreement brokered by the Prime Minister to improve energy efficiency unless the deal commits to using the UN as the main forum for global negotiations.

Australian officials have drafted a flexible deal that stops short of setting long-term goals for emissions reductions, accommodating the concerns of developing APEC countries. Instead, they want to put energy efficiency, which involved reducing fuel use to cut greenhouse emissions, as the centrepiece of Mr Howard's APEC climate change initiative.

The plan would fall short of Mr Howard's pre-APEC vision of negotiating a binding climate change commitment from the APEC leaders. But it would build on the aims of the Asia-Pacific partnership on Clean Development and

Climate, which brings together Australia, the US, China, Japan, South Korea and India to tackle climate change through the use of smarter technology.

Climate change emerged as a lead issue in yesterday's bilateral talks between George W. Bush and Mr Howard. The two leaders yesterday also signed a new defence trade co-operation treaty that will give Australia unprecedented access to the latest American military technology and equipment, and provide lucrative opportunities for Australian companies to tap into leading US defence projects, such as the \$15 billion Joint Strike Fighter project.

The US has also signalled it would improve on its promise to cut subsidies in an effort to break the deadlock at the World Trade Organisation talks.

21

The draft text of Mr Howard's proposed Sydney Declaration on climate change, which is being debated by officials, has been significantly rewritten since an earlier version was leaked by Greenpeace two weeks ago.

It remains committed to aspirational energy efficiency targets to improve energy efficiency of output by 25 per cent by 2030, to increase forest cover in the region by 20 million hectares by 2020, encourage transfer of low-emissions technologies and support strategies to help APEC countries adapt to climate change. It also recognises the role of clean coal technologies, renewable energy and nuclear energy as part of a low-emission energy solution for the region.

But developing economies - including China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines - remain strongly opposed to any form of words that commits them to binding targets. Many will refuse to sign any agreement at APEC that would challenge the effectiveness of ongoing UN negotiations on the issue.

Philippines President Gloria Arroyo welcomed climate change discussions at APEC but said the key forum for final negotiations remained the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which next meets in Bali in December.

Mr Bush yesterday stepped up pressure on China to deliver an APEC climate change deal for Mr Howard, with Australian officials conceding China's approach will make or break the APEC meeting.

Mr Howard and Mr Bush are in meetings this week expected to raise the energy-efficiency goal with Chinese President Hu Jintao in an effort to provide political momentum to changing China's rigid opposition.

Mr Bush said yesterday getting China to help set the goals of an international agreement on climate change was going to be a more effective strategy than imposing these conditions on the country.

"I am looking forward to discussions with the leader of China about a lot of issues, one of which will be climate change," he said. "In order for there to be an effective climate change policy, China needs to be at the table."

Mr Bush emphasised that it was not possible to have an effective global climate change policy unless China, which as a developing nation had a growing economy that would ensure it remained one of the world's biggest polluters, was involved.

Mr Bush played down concerns that his own summit with big greenhouse gas polluters later this month would undercut the Prime Minister's efforts in Sydney this week. "John and I have talked about his desire to put climate change at the forefront of APEC, and I was a strong supporter of that," he said at a joint press conference with Mr Howard. Australia and the US are banking on an agreement at APEC to unite developing and developed economies in addressing climate change.

But the Indonesian Foreign Affairs director-general for Asia and the Pacific, Primo Alui Joelianto, said a regional climate change agreement was limited. "Of course, if we (APEC) are going to issue a statement, we don't mind, as long as the statement is supportive of the UN framework," he said.

This critical impasse between rich and poor countries has been a significant impediment to global negotiations for any new climate change deal needed by 2012, when the Kyoto Protocol expires.

Australia's refusal to ratify Kyoto along with the US has hardened resistance by some developing countries to any climate change deal in Sydney.

Mr Howard yesterday also announced a new bilateral agreement on climate change and energy, with Australia committing \$15 million towards the FutureGen project to develop clean coal technology in the US. The plan also includes an action plan that will see the US steward nuclear energy in Australia through bilateral exchanges on research and development, regulatory issues, skills and training.

Alarm at illegal clearing of land

The equivalent of 10 football fields of native vegetation is cleared every day in Western Australia, two-thirds of it for mining and exploration projects, and it is done with the approval of the Carpenter Government.

But the state's Auditor-General, Colin Murphy, said more alarming was his finding that the Government had no idea how much land was being cleared illegally. Mr Murphy said many complaints received about illegal clearing were not followed up, hotspots identified by satellite imaging were not investigated, and permits were not monitored for compliance. He said it was impossible to estimate how much land was being illegally cleared.

"There simply is almost no effort at this stage going into compliance and monitoring."

More than 550 complaints were received by the Government in the past two years alleging illegal clearing, but Mr Murphy said more than half had not been addressed.

The damning report was tabled in parliament yesterday, prompting a chorus of alarm from environmentalists. WA Conservation Council director Chris Tallentire said the Government must act urgently to address the findings. "There's far too much native vegetation still being cleared in Western Australia and it's often occurring in areas where we've got precious little left," he said.

Despite new legislation being brought in three years ago with hefty penalties for illegal land clearing, including fines of \$500,000 for companies and \$250,000 for individuals, Mr Murphy said only two prosecutions had occurred.

Both were for relatively small areas and attracted fines of just \$1000 and \$2000 respectively.

22

A further eight cases are presently being developed by the Department of Environment. Its director-general, Keiran McNamara, denied there were any serious problems in the way his agency handled matters. But he conceded more attention had gone into educating people than prosecuting, and the focus would now change.

Mr Murphy said tighter controls and better safeguards were needed urgently and recommended the department establish a program for investigating potential illegal clearing when it was clearly identified through satellite imagery and public complaints.

His report revealed the Department of Industry and Resources had not rejected a single permit application from the resources sector in three years and had not conducted any meaningful follow-up to see if the permits were complied with.

Climate is OK to talk to US, says Garrett

Peter Garrett has committed to constructive engagement with the US on climate change, just days after criticising President George W. Bush's stance on the issue.

On the same day that Mr Bush applauded John Howard's leadership on climate change, the Opposition environment spokesman told the National Press Club he would step up to the challenge of working with the US if elected.

"I expect that, whatever differences there are in approach, that that will be overlaid by a constructive engagement," Mr Garrett said.

Earlier this week, the Prime Minister warned that Labor was not committed to the US alliance. He pointed to Mr Garrett's recent comments that he was "not a great fan" of Mr Bush because the US President's climate change policies were holding back the world.

Mr Garrett, who once campaigned against US military bases in Australia, struck a more diplomatic tone yesterday, promising dialogue with all nations on climate change. "Clearly that includes the US, which will have a critical role to play as we go towards Bali (the next UN climate change conference, in December)," he said.

Mr Garrett spoke in more glowing terms of China's embrace of energy efficiency and renewable energy targets and its adoption of photovoltaic technology.

Those commitments gave "some pretty positive signs that there can be good, complementary, co-operative negotiations with them (China)," he said.

The US refuses to sign a climate pact that does not commit China to emissions cuts.

China and the US, as well as other energy-intensive markets such as India and Japan, will be targeted under a \$15million program Mr Garrett announced yesterday to promote Australian clean energy firms abroad. Up to \$20 million more will go towards a new centre to help small and medium-sized businesses become export-ready.

The measures form part of an ALP plan to make Australia the clean energy hub of the Asia-Pacific region. They were announced as the Australian Conservation Foundation, which Mr Garrett once headed, estimated the cost of Australia's failure to ratify the Kyoto Protocol at \$3.8billion a year in lost investment opportunities.

The new study, conducted by sustainability consultancy Cambiar, counted the costs of foregone credits from carbon reduction and clean development projects and of lost trading revenue from an Australian carbon trading market.

Mr Garrett, who has promised Labor will ratify the Kyoto Protocol, warned of Australia's lack of preparedness for climate change due to Mr Howard's inaction.

But despite his leader Kevin Rudd's call for any APEC discussion on climate change to include specific targets for emissions cuts, Mr Garrett said Labor's own deliberations on short-term targets for reducing Australian emissions were at least nine months away.

Question: Is Peter Garrett playing in the same game as most of us, or is silent, speak when allowed to his game?

Adelaidenow.com.au

Rann: I feel pain on water

Premier Mike Rann has broken his silence over the state's water crisis, defending his Government's ban of drip watering. But he stressed his sympathy for farmers and fruit growers.

Mr Rann, who said he did trust home gardeners (**yet he expects us to trust him**) to control their drip watering and had sympathy for the frustration being expressed about harsh water restrictions, was responding yesterday to 10

water questions from The Advertiser.

He responded in writing via email, after declining to be interviewed by The Advertiser.

Mr Rann has been heavily criticised in the past week for remaining silent on the water crisis while Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald has taken the brunt of public outrage over the Government's bucket-only watering policy.

He yesterday defended the ban on drip irrigation and stressed that he and Mrs Maywald "have praised South Australians for collectively saving water" (make up your mind).

"Drippers are not allowed under water restrictions required under the Prime Minister's low inflow water sharing arrangements . . . I am delighted we were able to negotiate to have at least some outside watering that is equitable," Mr Rann said.

23

He did not rule out changing the policy in the next fortnight, saying it would be reviewed around September 17. "Nobody wants a drought and nobody likes water restrictions," he said. "Our sympathies especially lie with our farmers and fruit growers who are struggling to survive under severely restricted water allocations."

Mr Rann also defended his Government's record on ensuring SA's future water supply, arguing that "a great deal has been done in the past five years to build on our water infrastructure needs".

But he said SA "will always rely on the River Murray for much of its water supply".

He said water pricing options would be considered and that a desalination plant remained an option for Adelaide.

Let's point out one thing that is for sure, your Government Mr. Rann have been dithering sine John Hill MP relinquished the water portfolio, Mr. Rann why don't you listen to those within the community who could give sound advice, there are many so called experts within the Government, try broadening your's and Minister Maywald's information base.

Go-ahead for key water project

After almost two years of delays, a major water-saving project has been given the green light by the State Government.

The Government will match federal funding for the \$4.7 million Virginia Pipeline Scheme Extension, announced by Prime Minister John Howard in October, 2005.

It was taken up as an *Advertiser Watch* issue in May, as it remained stalled for 18 months after \$2.035 million of federal funding was approved.

Last night, Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said the State Government would commit more than \$2.5 million to the project.

She said the extension should be completed by September next year.

The decision ends years of uncertainty for Angle Vale irrigators.

Under the plan to build a 20km extension to the Bolivar-to-Virginia pipeline, an extra 3000 megalitres a year of treated waste water would be pumped to Angle Vale's horticultural area every year.

The treated effluent, diverted for use by irrigators north of Adelaide, otherwise would go out to sea.

The major sticking point between the state and federal governments has been issues over groundwater management.

As reported by The Advertiser in July, the federal Water Resources Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, had written to Ms Maywald seeking co-operation in getting the major project off the ground.

Ms Maywald last night said the project would increase Adelaide's use of recycled water, reduce discharge of harmful nutrients into the Gulf St Vincent, cut demand on groundwater resources and help reduce River Murray extractions.

"Virginia was the first and largest recycled water scheme of its type in Australia and is still one of the largest in the southern hemisphere," Ms Maywald said.

"Already, the existing Virginia Pipeline Scheme currently distributes about 15 billion litres per year of treated waste water from the Bolivar treatment plants to irrigators in the Virginia area.

"Construction of the Angle Vale extension to the scheme means 35 per cent of treated waste water at the plant will be reused."

A spokesman for Mr Turnbull last night said the minister welcomed the "belated" decision.

"Adelaide has been waiting two years for the Rann Government to get its act together to allow this project to proceed – it's just another example in a long line of delayed action on urban water infrastructure," he said.

Angle Vale almond grower Nick Pezzaniti said the extension guaranteed a water supply that allowed horticulturists to plan for the future.

"We've got rid of an environmental problem . . . it's a win situation for the growers and the wider community," he said.

Green credits to our wine an edge

Wine industry officials are likely to be among the first to sign up to a voluntary emissions deal with the State Government.

The move may boost sales of South Australian wine overseas.

Premier Mike Rann said the Carbon Trust in Britain, with supermarket chains, had indicated they would introduce "carbon footprint labelling", which shows steps taken to reduce the emissions impact of the labelled product. "This will essentially mean the ecological and carbon footprint of wines imported into Britain, including from Australia, will be clearly marked on the bottle," he said.

Britain is one of the biggest overseas markets for SA wine.

Mr Rann said that, by putting the carbon footprint details on the bottle, consumers concerned about greenhouse gases would be able to make a comparison between wines. He said they would be able to see how much greenhouse gas and other emissions had been created by the way in which the wine was produced or transported to market.

24

"To protect and advance its position in the lucrative UK market, there is obvious advantage in the Australian wine industry responding to this new trend and getting in on the ground floor," Mr Rann said.

He said the SA wine industry had surveyed global trends. "It has decided to make an early start on countering what it sees as a potential, long-term threat from climate change," he said. "I'm confident sector agreements such as these will prove a positive thing."

Pipes feed bore to McWater garden

Andrew McWaters is keeping his garden green by giving nature a helping hand.

The Trinity Gardens man has connected stormwater pipes from the roof of his house to a private bore, the underground supply being replenished from the sky as he uses it to irrigate his plants.

"(Usually) bores take out water that may not be replaced," he said.

"If we put the stormwater back down the bore, it goes into storage instead of going out to the Gulf."

Mr McWaters said more than enough rainwater was collected to offset bore use for the garden and toilet.

In time, the salinity of the groundwater would be reduced, possibly making the water drinkable.

In the past 12 years, 700 bores have been drilled in the metropolitan area.

The number of new bores being sunk across Adelaide has increased from 85 in 2005 to a record 216 so far this year.

Rann 'work-for-Rudd' blast

The State Opposition today claimed Premier Mike Rann is avoiding the water crisis debate because he has been seconded to work on Federal Labor's election campaign.

State Liberal Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said it appears Mr Rann, Labor's Senior National Vice President, is spending more time working for Mr Rudd.

"South Australia is in the grip of the worst water crisis in more than 100 years and Premier Rann is missing in action," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

"I've been told that Premier Rann attends the ALP headquarters at the start of each day to co-ordinate the national telephone hook-up of Labor premiers to plan how they will work together to help Rudd.

"South Australians elected Premier Rann to work for them – not be seconded to Kevin Rudd's election campaign.

"Premier Rann needs to show leadership on fixing his bucket-only water restrictions rather than helping his Labor mate to get into the Lodge."

A spokeswoman for the Premier said the claims were "unsubstantiated nonsense generated by Liberals with nothing better to do than think up unsubstantiated nonsense".

The Democrats, meanwhile, today said expert warnings Adelaide must cut water use by 50 per cent "prove SA will not be able to cope with a bigger population".

State Democrats MP Sandra Kanck said slashing water use means radical changes to agriculture, giving households incentives and advice to cut their water use and freezing SA's population.

"The drought and global warming prove that if you can't manage water you can't manage South Australia," Ms Kanck said.

Liberal backbencher Liz Penfold also today said a private company seeking to build a desalination plant at Ceduna is still waiting for a response from the Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald to a letter sent last March.

"The BHP desalination plant proposed for Whyalla is years away, and a desalination plant for Adelaide is still not on Labor's radar," Ms Penfold said.

"The Ceduna desalination plant would replace highly chlorinated hard water currently being delivered to the district, would be totally sustainable environmentally, and would help to take pressure off the River Murray.

"Taxpayers are not being asked to fund this project which one would expect the State Government to facilitate as quickly as possible in light of the state's dire water situation.

"But more than two years on, the Labor State Government still isn't facilitating the proposal and federal grant opportunities are being lost.

"I commend Ceduna District Council for sticking with the project despite Labor's delays and inaction, for instance a Labor Minister taking more than 12 months to respond to a letter from council."

A response is being sought from Ms Maywald's office.

Gardens face complete water bans

Meanwhile, South Australia faces a complete ban on garden watering by the end of the month, as Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald warns tougher rules are likely.

As public outrage continued yesterday over the Government's decision to outlaw drip irrigation systems in favour of a bucket-only watering policy, Mrs Maywald said the Government remained in "sensitive and difficult" water negotiations with the federal, Victorian and NSW Governments.

Those discussions are shaping the contents of the next Murray-Darling Basin Dry Inflow Contingency Planning report.

25

To be agreed to by Prime Minister John Howard and the premiers of SA, Victoria and NSW, it is due about the middle of this month, when details of further restrictions for SA will become clear.

Mrs Maywald said yesterday that "unless it rains (in the catchments) in the next couple of weeks, we're going to have to consider further restrictions".

"Obviously, if we don't get rainfall during the month of September, then we'll have to review all restrictions as necessary," she said.

The Advertiser understands the likely option is a ban on all outdoor watering, making the current debate on the merits of overturning a bucket-only policy effectively irrelevant.

But the Government could adopt Queensland's policy of further restricting bucket watering and only allowing watering with buckets or watering cans on allocated days between certain times.

The State Government's decision also is likely to be influenced by the working committee's report, due this month, studying a desalination plant for Adelaide.

Restrictions a pain in the back

A rise in back injuries in South Australia has been linked to water restrictions, the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) says.

The South Australian government has banned the use of hoses and drippers in gardens, forcing residents to use buckets to water plants.

CAA spokesman Patrick Sim said that had sparked a rise in back problems from carting heavy buckets of water.

"An increasing number of chiropractors across South Australia are seeing a lot of people with bucket back," Dr Sim said.

"Although the government has extended the temporary ban on outdoor watering, buckets are still permitted for gardening meaning that more and more people are bending over putting their backs at risk."

Dr Sim said education was needed to address the problem at a state level.

"A common gardening bucket holds 10 litres, which when filled equates to 10 kilograms - a load still too heavy for many people to manage," he said.

"Carrying water buckets is an issue not only because of the weight carried, but also because water is an unstable weight, putting uneven stress on one side of the body."

The CAA said gardening could cause a range of problems including back strain, neck strain and shoulder pain.

"The carrying of heavy buckets further impacts these health risks," Dr Sim said.

Adelaidenow.com

Water restrictions may never end – experts

Australia may never fully recover from the current decade-long drought due to climate change, experts have warned.

The nation was facing a "new reality" of harsh water restrictions and a new climate with run-offs and river inflows the first casualty, speakers at today's Bureau of Meteorology national post-winter update said.

It was also revealed that although above-average rain fell along Australia's east coast in June-July, August rainfall in the southeast had been "terrible".

Areas affected by drought included nearly all population centres with Adelaide and Brisbane most vulnerable, although Sydney had enjoyed a bumper winter of rain.

Two months of rain was not enough to stop a 10-year drought and the outlook was grim due to "human-induced" climate change, the Bureau's National Climate Centre head Dr Mike Coughlan said.

"It is difficult for us to base predictions on historical records because over a 30-year period the climate at the beginning is quite different to the climate at the end," he said.

The immediate problem for Australians affected by drought and water restrictions was to get needed strong rainfalls in spring, with October traditionally the wettest month of the year.

The chances of that happening were good in Western Australia (50 to 55 per cent), but less so in Victoria and South Australia (40 to 45 per cent), with a 50 per cent chance between Sydney and Brisbane.

Good spring rain would stop storage levels in Australian capital cities dropping further, with Melbourne (39 per cent), Brisbane (20 per cent) and Canberra (43 per cent) all at lower levels than 12 months ago. Dr Coughlan said a hoped-for La Nina weather pattern, bringing cool, wet weather, had so far been mostly wasted, occurring too far to the east over the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean. High temperatures in August had added to the problem, Water Services Association of Australia executive director Ross Young said. "Someone turned off the tap in Melbourne and Canberra, especially," he said. "Population growth in all capital cities exacerbates the problem, and we will grow by another 65 per cent by 2050." The Murray river's inflow and storage levels are at record-low levels with daily inflows not having exceeded the long-term 116-year average once in 2007.

26

This affects South Australia particularly, which is currently receiving a quarter of average inflows and relies on the river for 40 per cent of the state's water.

"The outlook is very grim and it will take years to recover," Murray Darling Basin Commission chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said.

Of Australia's agricultural land, 50 to 60 per cent was drought and exceptional circumstances declared, with farmers in those areas having received \$1.85 billion in assistance so far.

Victorian Premier John Brumby said his Government would discuss possible further assistance for farmers at a community cabinet meeting in the Buloke shire, in Victoria's northwest, this month.

Mr Brumby said it was too early to know whether Melbourne would need to move to stage four water restrictions. Speakers at the briefing said food prices and water bills would rise due to the drought.

7th

FarmOnline

Big dry set to roll on in Vic

There is no end in sight to the drought and Victorian farmers face a grim summer, experts predict.

High hopes for rains from the La Nina weather pattern were fading fast, Bureau of Meteorology climate centre chief, Michael Coughlan told a Melbourne media conference today.

"Is this drought over? Certainly not - we can't predict when this drought will end," Dr Coughlan said.

And record high temperatures so far this year across most of Victoria and southern Australia had added to the problem, increasing evaporation from water stores.

Irrigators on the Murray system face an uncertain future.

Murray Darling Basin Commission chief executive, Wendy Craik, said combined record low water stores and inflows would hit hard this year.

"The situation is grim. Storages are already 1700 billion litres below what they were this time last year," Dr Craik said.

SOURCE: *The Age*, Melbourne, a Fairfax publication.

Adelaidenow.com

10 years of water bans

South Australians should prepare for water restrictions for up to 10 years because the state is unlikely to ever fully recover from the current drought.

Issuing a blunt prediction, Murray Darling Basin Commission chief executive Wendy Craik yesterday told *The Advertiser* South Australians would have to accept restrictions as a way of life.

Asked whether this would extend for a decade, Dr Craik said the drought had created an "unprecedented situation" and it was uncertain when this would end.

Bureau of Meteorology National Climate Centre head Mike Coughlan said it would be "imprudent not to plan" for water restrictions being a part of life in SA for another decade.

Dr Craik said restrictions should be expected until there were "significant inflows" into the Murray-Darling system.

"This is an unprecedented situation and we're operating the river in a way we never have before," she warned. "I guess we're all having to come to grips with living and operating in an environment that's completely different to what we've come to expect."

The Bureau of Meteorology's national post-winter update yesterday was told householders faced a "new reality" of harsh water restrictions.

It was also revealed that although above-average rain fell along Australia's east coast in June and July, August rainfall in the south-east had been "terrible".

Areas affected by drought included nearly all population centres with Adelaide and Brisbane most vulnerable. SA was rated just a 40 to 45 per cent chance of getting strong rainfalls in spring.

The River Murray's inflow and storage levels are at record low levels, with daily inflows not having exceeded the

long-term, 116-year average once this year.

This particularly affects SA, which is receiving a quarter of average inflows and relies on the river for 40 per cent of the state's water.

Dr Craik said the outlook was very grim and it would take years to recover.

"I think for the rest of the year we're clearly going to have some kind of restrictions in place and everybody is going to have to be careful with their water," she said.

Dr Craik predicted a spring and summer on the Murray like no other since Hume Dam was completed in 1936.

The National Climate Centre's Dr Mike Coughlan said, politically, Adelaide had to be supplied with water, so farmers and irrigators tended to suffer first.

"In the short term, it is certainly a grim outlook. There's not much left to release and come down the rivers," he said.

27

But he said a hoped-for La Nina weather pattern, bringing cool, wet weather, had so far been mostly wasted, occurring too far to the east over the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald last night told The Advertiser SA should not have to face a decade of water restrictions.

"If we manage the Murray-Darling Basin system better and we deal with the over-allocation and we're realistic about the approach to how we bring the system back into balance – and we actually make that commitment – then extracting less than 1 per cent at the end of the system should be achievable," she said.

"I also agree we should reduce our dependency on the River Murray and we should also work to build into our water security ways in which we can manage the variability that is likely to occur as a consequence of climate change."

A working group report on a desalination plant for Adelaide is expected next month but Mrs Maywald would not pre-empt its results. Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said as long as SA was dependent on the River Murray, water restrictions would be a way of life. "Mike Rann's lack of action on water infrastructure may stand as his greatest failure," he said.

The Australian

Retreat of the penguins

In 1929 Australian adventurer and photographer Frank Hurley snapped a picture of the bleak landscape of Heard Island, in the bitterly cold Southern Ocean. He recorded for posterity a thriving colony of photogenic macaroni penguins as well as the rocky site, Erratic Point.

Seventy-one years later, seabird ecologist Eric Woehler stood where Hurley had placed his tripod. With a click of the shutter the University of Tasmania scientist captured the same view: rocks, coastline, ocean, penguins. It was the same, but different.

"In the late 1920s there were about 250 breeding pairs," says Woehler. "But when I was there in 2000 the colony was less than 20 pairs and grass had grown around the edge of the colony."

This is hardly the world-saving stuff of Hollywood-style Happy Feet takes on one of the most lovable creatures on the planet. In fact, like his US colleagues Susie Ellis, Dee Boersma and Elizabeth Skewgar, Woehler fears that the past and the present signal a worrisome future for the world's 17 species of penguins.

"They face serious population decreases throughout their range," the team writes in Conservation Status of the World's Penguins, a report that Ellis presented this week at the sixth International Penguin Conference, meeting in Hobart.

Going further, the researchers use words unusual in scientific discourse: "grim progression", "disconcerting decrease" and dire. All up, Woehler and company conclude that unless scientists, governments, conservation groups and the public take immediate action to reverse the trend, penguin populations will plummet. Many species face extinction.

That's more than a tragedy for the seabirds themselves, Woehler says. "Penguins are the bellwether of climate change. As birds they're pretty much at the top of the food chain and act as two-footed bio-indicators of the health of the environment, marine and terrestrial," he says.

Seabird ecologist Shaye Wolf - with the non-governmental organisation the Centre for Biological Diversity in San Francisco - agrees. She says 12 species are in immediate danger, among them Antarctica's legendary emperor penguins. "The emperor colony at Pointe Geologie, immortalised in the film March of the Penguins, has declined by over 50 per cent since the 1960s," says Wolfe, in Australia for the meeting.

According to Wolf, the CBD is so concerned that earlier this year it pushed the US Fish and Wildlife Service to list 12 species on the federal list of endangered and threatened wildlife and plants. The service recently agreed that listing may be warranted for 10 species - from emperors and macaronis to rock hoppers and yellow-eyed penguins - and will begin reviewing scientific, public and commercial submissions this month. Listed species qualify for

research and conservation funding and legally mandated measures designed to reduce threats such as commercial fishing, so it's more than a symbolic statement, Wolfe says.

It's difficult to imagine that these charismatic seabirds are in peril. After all, most live on isolated sub-Antarctic islands such as Heard, the frigid tips of the southern continents or the Antarctic continent itself.

But as Woehler says, "the list of threats is phenomenal".

He ticks them off: habitat loss, human disturbance, competition from commercial fisheries, oil spills, marine pollution and predation by foxes and dogs. Finally, there's the big one: global warming.

Penguins may look miserable huddling against freezing winds, but for them cold weather is good weather, says Phil Lyver, an avian ecologist with Land Care Research, a quasi-governmental body in New Zealand. All species are dependent upon the cold Antarctic circumpolar current, rich in krill, fish and other nutritious foods. Even penguins that live as far north as the Galapagos Islands survive because cold currents linked to the ACC pass nearby.

28

Others such as emperors and adelies - the only species found on the Antarctic continent - also need sea ice. "They need sea ice to forage, like a floating island," explains Lyver, adding that krill, a favoured food, thrive under sheets of sea ice.

He says that because climate change is "very patchy", the sea ice along the Antarctic Peninsula is melting, while there's too much winter ice in the Ross Sea, where he and his US colleagues monitor adie penguins. "The sea ice there is taking penguins beyond the ACC, the productive area," Lyver says. The result: poorly nourished adults less able to breed and chicks unable to thrive.

Warming may also have triggered the break-up of the Ross Sea ice shelf. In March 2000 the 20km by 40km B-15 iceberg broke off the shelf, locking in the sea ice for three consecutive breeding seasons and creating a huge distance from land where penguins nest to the edge of the sea ice where they forage. Usually the ice shrinks towards the coast during the summer breeding season, allowing adults to make quick foraging runs to feed their chicks.

"But (those years) the penguins had to walk," recalls Lyver.

"It took three days to walk to the edge of the ice and back. Normally it takes only a few hours. They couldn't provision chicks," says Lyver, who predicts a drop in penguin numbers in the next few years from low chick survival. Wolf adds that due to the mega-iceberg the entire colony of 1200 emperor penguins at Cape Crozier on Ross Island failed to reproduce in the summer of 2001-02.

Still, Lyver claims Ross Sea penguins have suffered little from human activity, compared with populations elsewhere. This gives scientists an opportunity to gather baseline data on the ebbs and flows of natural penguin life before human contact.

As University of Tasmania doctoral student Phillipa Bricher has shown, just living near people can put a damper on penguin numbers, even if the neighbours are well-behaved scientists like those at Australia's Casey Station on Bailey Peninsula.

Using geographic information systems and spatial landscape data, Bricher sorted natural variation from human impacts on colonies of adie penguins living on the Antarctic continent. She found the colonies protected from people have increased on average 600 per cent since 1960. Those situated near Casey Station grew by less than 15 per cent or not at all in some years.

According to Woehler, the findings are troubling, especially as tourism to the Antarctic Peninsula, in particular, has skyrocketed in recent years. "There are more than 25,000 tourists in a three-month (summer) window," he says.

"The science and support staff is less than 5000."

But Woehler says steps can be taken to reduce the downside of tourism. Right now, the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators is talking with Antarctic Treaty nations such as Australia, New Zealand and the US about methods of regulating and monitoring the industry's activities. Woehler is also passionate about direct action closer to home. Case in point: little penguins such as those that enthrall visitors to Victoria's Phillip Island.

The penguins also establish colonies along the Tasmanian and NSW coastlines. "There's direct competition between humans and penguins for coastal residential areas," he says, predicting greater conflict as sea levels rise and intense storms increase in a warming world.

"We need to incorporate a buffer zone into coastal planning," says Woehler. "We must also put greater effort into controlling predators. Foxes are efficient predators and dogs are capable of killing a penguin just by closing its jaw on the penguin's skull. Here in Tasmania every few years we get a big dog kill (of penguins). A few years ago 50 to 60 penguins were killed by dogs in one night."

Physical leashes for dogs, conceptual leashes for tourists and fishing boats, buffer zones and marine parks: these and other conservation strategies are in the scientific spotlight this week.

As the conference convener, Woehler wants action plans to emerge from this week's meeting, as well as details about the latest research. That's so because while it's not possible to turn the clock back to 1929 - and although experts agree the risk to penguins worldwide is grave - researchers are confident that a strategic global effort could

keep penguins in the photo frame for the next generation of adventurers, photographers, scientists and penguin fans. If so, that really would be the stuff of Happy Feet.

Leigh Dayton is The Australian's science writer.

Parched summer on way

Up to two million Australians in the lower Murray-Darling catchment are facing the worst summer of water restrictions and shortages in 70 years.

The warning by the head of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, Wendy Craik, was just one of several issued yesterday by some of Australia's top experts on drought and climate change.

Some predicted that Australia may never fully recover from the current dry.

Water Services Association of Australia executive director Ross Young said the outlook for capital cities apart from Sydney, Hobart and Darwin, was "not looking good". \

29

"It is going to take a concerted effort to make sure we implement appropriate restrictions and water conservation measures to get through this summer and the next one," he said.

"Around Australia, Brisbane, of all the capitals, is the one that really does have its back to the wall."

He added that Adelaide "has got to ask how reliable the Murray is going to be this summer and next summer, given that the tank really is empty."

Adelaide draws at least 40 per cent of its water from the Murray.

Dr Craik detailed the gravity of the Murray's situation from an "unprecedented combination of low storage levels and low inflows".

The nation's biggest river system is holding 1700 gigalitres less water in storage this year than at the same time last year, the worst on record.

For the towns, communities and farmers of the nation's food bowl, she warned of "significant challenges" ahead.

"We are facing a spring and summer on the Murray like no other," she said.

"It will take multiple years for storages to recover, and the outlook is very grim."

Michael Coughlan of the National Climate Centre indicated vast swaths of the continent had a less than 50 per cent chance of getting their regular rainfall through spring.

Adelaidenow.com

The harsh truth about SA's water

The distressing nature of South Australia's water supply has been starkly outlined by the predictions of Murray-Darling Basin Commission chief executive Wendy Craik.

Dr Craik's warnings have confirmed our worst fears. Adelaide, and many rural centres reliant on River Murray water, face lengthy, perhaps permanent, water restrictions.

Her predictions present a direct and unpalatable challenge to both the federal and state governments.

The State Government squandered an opportunity during the relative comfort of early winter rains to outline a long-term and sustainable agenda to ease fears of water shortages.

It appears to have gambled on reasonable winter rains, not only in SA but in the wider Murray River catchment areas to the east.

But the winter rains petered out. The River Murray has not had the essential inflow of water from its tributaries.

Now the burst of warm weather has sparked domestic alarm about water restrictions and the long-term stability of supplies.

This has been fuelled by the State Government's political failure.

It has not demonstrated the leadership necessary to soothe public concern and frustration.

Dr Craik's warning must finally force the State Government to recognise that it has to outline a credible, if possibly unpalatable, short-term and long-term policy for the continuous and reliable supply of potable water to every SA household.

The argument about whether to water the garden with buckets or drippers, whether people should be allowed to use spas or refill swimming pools, has been superseded by a more urgent need.

It is the Government's responsibility to outline and implement a credible and workable policy for water retention and supply.

The Government must take the people into its confidence and openly and transparently outline the problems and solutions.

South Australians have a right to know their water supplies are assured.

The continued reliance on short-term, knee-jerk reactions, obfuscation and inaction will diminish public confidence and, ultimately, lead to panic and defiance.

Water questions flood in

South Australians want answers about the state's ongoing water crisis, according to AdelaideNow readers.

The website has been inundated with questions since giving readers the chance to publish their queries online for Premier Mike Rann to answer.

Questions about looming water restrictions, a possible desalination plant and South Australian reservoirs dominated.

For Robert, of Morphett Vale, more reservoirs in Adelaide should be a main priority.

"Why are you not building any new reservoirs in SA?" he asked.

Geoff Coker, of Melbourne, wants to know what emergency plans the government has in place.

"What is your Disaster Recovery Plan for Morgan Murray River water piped to the west of SA if the water becomes too salty to drink?" he posted. A Wright, of Urrbrae, believes a desalination plant should be on the agenda and asked if this was a possibility. "How long before a decision is made on a desalination plant and when would it be operational?" he queried.

Many were also critical of the government's handling of the water issue, with a complete ban on garden watering by the end of the month possible.

30

Merilyn Kuchel, of Stirling, described the Rann regime as "illogical and inequitable".

"It does not target water wastage inside the home, nor in industries, nor has put any limits on the use of groundwater, not even on the number of buckets we can tip onto the ground," she said.

"I simply want our government to allocate 140 litres per person per day and allow me to choose whether I wash my clothes, flush the toilet or use my allocation to water vegetable seedlings or precious trees and shrubs."

For Rob Silva of Houghton, the question is simple. "You're (Mr Rann) quoted as saying a great deal has been done to build our water infrastructure needs, my questions is please tell us more about this deal you've done," he said.

The questions will be put to Mr Rann and his responses posted online.

Adelaide Advertiser

TALK: Look west and invest to solve our water crisis

It should come as no surprise that water restrictions will get tougher.

Industry and households should be prepared to use even less water right through to 2010 if action is not taken soon on building major desalination plants to supply Adelaide with water. South Australia is being shown up by our neighbours in the west in dealing with the water crisis. Western Australia appears to be approaching the problem with a long-term solution in mind but our State Government's approach appears to be to let businesses, farms and gardens die. Perth has a desalination plant that has been operating since November and has the capacity to deliver 45GL/annum. By 2011 another plant there will deliver an additional 50GL/annum with possible upgrade to 100GL/annum. That 95GL is equivalent to about half what SA Water delivers to Adelaide each year.

Perth does have water restrictions but they are far less restrictive than in Adelaide while its residential water charges for use up to a megalitre also seem to be lower than here after bearing the desalination plant costs.

It is also interesting to note that WA Water Corporation delivers a bigger dividend and higher return on equity to the WA Government than SA Water delivers to the SA Government.

There is a lot to learn from the WA experience.

The desalination option for SA is not the silver bullet, as other collection, recycling and conservation measures need to be taken.

It is, however, likely to be an important part of the solution.

Money need not be the stumbling block in solving the state's long-term water problems.

The State Government needs to understand the financing of water infrastructure such as desalination plants is not simply a public sector issue. There would likely be strong private sector interest to fund this infrastructure. It could be packaged and sold to investors for a reasonable return on investment. There is a lot of money in investment markets looking for a home in quality infrastructure projects.

SA should be viewing the state's water crisis as an opportunity rather than a death knell.

By being pro-active we have the opportunity to become a world leader in water management and export our expertise and solutions across the world.

The debate on water needs to be broadened and the community educated on the various options being considered.

We should also be asking whether the parklands can be better utilised in our water management solution. Is the public adequately educated on the benefits of recycling water?

Adelaide needs to turn off its Murray tap and leave this valued water resource to our state's irrigators and rehabilitation of the river. We must look more closely at desalination plants and place more focus on harvesting the city's rainfall, recycling, making our water distribution more efficient as well as getting the right price structures in place. Adelaide should be securing its own core independent water supply and possibly building three or four water desalination plants over the next five years, harnessing stormwater and increasing recycling.

The State Government's blinkered focus on cutting water consumption by merely turning off the taps is hampering SA's long-term ability to solve the water crisis.

The State needs to adopt a new mindset to solve its water crisis. By putting all our eggs in the Murray basket, we are closing our minds to market-based and technological solutions on our doorstep. There is also no certainty the other states will continue to let the water flow even if it rains heavily. We should be under no illusions – they will look after their own businesses, farms and householders first for power and water.

Already water restrictions in the eastern states have reduced their electricity generation. We need an independent solution. Darryl Gobbett is chief economist at Prescott Securities.

newscom.au

APEC embraces greenhouse cuts

*US and China agree to fight global greenhouse gas emissions

*APEC leaders expect to sign "Sydney Declaration"

*Leaders agree on goals but have not set specific targets

Chinese President Hu Jintao and George W. Bush have delivered a sweeping victory for John Howard on climate change, agreeing for the first time to accept global goals to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

31

APEC leaders are today expected to sign the "Sydney Declaration", putting an aspirational target at the centre of cutting global carbon emissions after the Kyoto climate change protocol expires in 2012.

The agreement puts the fight against climate change at a new global level, placing the declaration at the heart of meetings in Washington next month and Bali in December.

By involving China and the US in agreeing to set targets, the Prime Minister's gamble of putting the climate at the middle of the Sydney APEC agenda has paid off.

The declaration to be signed by the 21 Asia-Pacific economies will for the first time have China and the US agreeing that a global target for cutting emissions must be part of the world's response on climate change.

Leaders will agree that aspirational goals have to be set but the APEC forum will not sign up to a specific target. Officials concluded days of negotiations in Sydney last night with a "clear text" for the Asia-Pacific leaders to consider today.

Apart from the breakthrough on getting agreement on setting aspirational goals, the Sydney Declaration includes APEC-specific agreements, with binding regional targets to cut energy use and increase forests by 2030.

It also carries a reference to the use of nuclear power as being a necessary part of the effort to fight greenhouse gases. The developments came as Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday pledged that no Australian uranium would be used to build nuclear bombs following a \$1-billion-a-year deal to export Australian uranium to Russia. The Russian leader, who landed in Sydney early yesterday, also denied that he was triggering an arms race in Asia with plans to sell submarines and fighter jets to Indonesia.

"These are legal and open transactions and they lead to no negative consequences in the world, they do not somehow disturb any balance," he said.

Climate change negotiators warned that some additions and cuts could occur to the document drafted last night as late-arriving leaders to the APEC summit in Sydney considered the details of the Sydney Declaration.

Gaining agreement from the US, China, ASEAN countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as the developed economies of Canada and Japan, will boost Australia's international standing on climate change.

Australia's role in addressing climate change will also be enhanced when Canada announces its intention to join the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

It was previously known as AP6, bringing together Australia, China, the US, Japan, India and South Korea to tackle climate change issues with smarter, greener technology.

Mr Bush praised Australia's role in the AP6 group, because it got everybody to the negotiating table, and said Mr Howard had showed great leadership on the issue of climate change.

But Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd said the Howard Government had previously been highly critical of the use of aspirational targets - not binding aims as is the case under the Kyoto Protocol - and it would be "interesting" to see the Coalition's reaction to the Sydney Declaration.

The days of negotiations on goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions included pressure from Japan and Canada, which have both ratified the Kyoto Protocol, for binding targets. China and the US were reluctant to formally accept the principle of goals, and there had been resistance from developing nations in Asia.

Mr Bush has been keen to make the point that his Washington conference has not detracted from the APEC meeting and the US acceptance of aspirational goals - something Mr Bush only agreed to "consider" at the recent G8 meeting in Germany - demonstrates his wish to lift the profile of the APEC summit on climate change. Mr Bush will now take the Sydney Declaration, and the basis of the tentative G8 agreement, to his own climate change meeting in Washington.

China's inclusion in the agreement ensures it is comprehensive, although the declaration allows for "national circumstances and flexibility", which will assist China and Indonesia to cut emissions without damaging their

economies.

8th

news.com.au

Aspirational climate goals needed - APEC

APEC leaders have agreed to the need for long-term aspirational goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Prime Minister John Howard said today, but they have not set any specific targets.

"(They agreed) the need for a long-term aspirational, global emissions reduction, goal," he said in a statement read to camera.

After the conclusion of the first day of the APEC leaders' summit, Mr Howard released the so-called Sydney Declaration, which also requires all nations to be part of the solution to the global warming problem.

"(It also includes) the need for all nations, no matter what their stage of development, to contribute according to their own capacity and their own circumstances to reducing greenhouse gases," Mr Howard said.

The third component of the declaration is specific goals for the 21 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economies on energy intensity and forestry, Mr Howard said.

32

The lack of specific greenhouse reduction targets was widely expected after a draft of the statement was leaked last month. "This is even worse than the low expectations people had because it doesn't even set a long-term aspirational goal, there's no figure like 50 per cent by 2050, or 20 per cent by 2020," Greenpeace's Ben Oquist said.

Alive and kicking

Mr Howard said the Sydney Declaration emphasised the "relevance of APEC".

"It demonstrates that APEC is very much alive and kicking. It does illustrate again the strength in consensus-based diversity and informal meetings and this declaration does transcend a number of international divisions."

The declaration affirms the primary importance of the United Nations framework to deal with climate change, a point [China's President Hu Jintao](#) indicated was critical to any agreement on the statement.

Mr Howard said APEC would add to the momentum on climate change, particularly a meeting of major economies dealing with the problem in Washington later this month and a UN forum in Bali in December.

"The Sydney Declaration ... is very important in the march towards a sensible international agreement on climate change which recognises the need to make progress but also recognises that different economies bring different perspectives to addressing the challenge of climate change," he said.

In the statement, the APEC leaders declared their recognition that "economic growth, energy security and climate change are fundamental and interlinked challenges for the APEC region".

"The dynamism of APEC, underpinned by open trade and investment, has reduced poverty, improved living standards and delivered economic and social development," the Sydney Declaration said.

"Our success has relied in part on secure supplies of energy, the use of which has also contributed to air quality problems and greenhouse gas emissions.

'Ambitious'

"We are committed, through wide-ranging and ambitious actions, to ensuring the energy needs of the economies of the region while addressing the issue of environmental quality and contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions."

Mr Howard said it was a major international challenge to meet energy needs and development priorities while at the same time addressing the problem of climate change.

"In the Sydney Declaration, the leaders have moved to forge a new international consensus," he said.

"We are serious about addressing, in a sensible way compatible with our different economic needs, the great challenge of climate change.

"Each of us comes to the APEC table with different perspectives, reflecting both our diversity and strengths.

"And yet in the Sydney Declaration we have agreed on three very important and quite specific things."

The Australian

Halve use of water to save Darling

The extraction of water by irrigators on one of the Murray-Darling Basin's least developed tributaries would need to be halved by 2030 to ensure the Darling River received its minimum mandated flow.

The results of the CSIRO survey into the Warrego River, the first of a series on the basin, is alarming because it suggests that more developed river systems, like the Condamine-Balonne, will face serious problems.

By 2030, climate change and water use will see a 7 per cent reduction in the amount of water that flows out of the Warrego, in southwest Queensland, into the Darling.

Water extraction would have to be halved on the second-least developed river in the basin for the Warrego's water-sharing plan, which specifies 89 per cent of its flows should reach the Darling.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission reports there is less than 12 gigalitres (billion litres) of private water storage built along the Warrego, compared with 1333GL on the Condamine-Balonne. In 2005-06, 25GL passed through Cunnamulla on the Warrego, while the total flow through St George, on the Balonne, was 123GL. The CSIRO report includes the eight gigalitres of Warrego water that the Queensland Government intends auctioning off.

The report was commissioned by the Prime Minister's Water Summit last November and is the most comprehensive report of its kind undertaken by the organisation.

CSIRO team leader Tom Hatton said they began with the Warrego because it was an upstream river. The final reports, due to be delivered by the end of the year, will be on the Murray and Darling Rivers.

"It is a region that is relatively dry," Dr Hatton said.

"The data is quite sparse relative to the rest of the basin. It is not a highly developed system and there is really limited acreage of irrigation."

The CSIRO assessed current water use, including the interaction between groundwater and surface water. It also estimated future water use, looking at the impact of climate change and future developments like plantations and farm dams that would reduce stream flow.

"I cannot overemphasise how complex and large that task is," Dr Hatton said. "It is the largest project in CSIRO's history ... and we have 12 months to deliver it."

33

Dr Hatton said the best estimate of the impact of climate change on the Warrego was that it would reduce river flows by 6 per cent in 2030, leading to 7 per cent less water flowing into the Darling River. "It is important to appreciate there is variation among the climate models."

He said the hydrology of the 137,000-hectare Yantabulla swamp, and the water holes along the Warrego had not been affected by current development.

But Dr Hatton said, by 2030, the frequency of beneficial flows to the swamp would be reduced by 10 per cent, and to water holes by 9 per cent "and would likely have an adverse affect on water bird breeding and fish populations".

Murray-Darling Basin Commission chief executive Wendy Craik said the outlook for the southern basin was grim. The Murray has recorded its 23rd consecutive month of below-average inflow.

"The storages are low, the inflows are low," she said. Most of the inflow into the Murray occurs during winter and spring.

"There is a very small chance of average inflows for the rest of the year. It is going to take multiple years to recover our storages and the outlook is grim."

Last year, inflows into the Murray were the lowest on record, just 1211GL, far below the average of 11,100GL.

Assistant federal Environment and Water Resources Minister John Cobb said the report "underlines the incredible variability of the system".

He said the federal Government was considering buying the eight gigalitres to be auctioned on the Warrego.

Parched summer on way

John Wiseman | *September 07, 2007*

UP to two million Australians in the lower Murray-Darling catchment are facing the worst summer of water restrictions and shortages in 70 years.

The warning by the head of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, Wendy Craik, was just one of several issued yesterday by some of Australia's top experts on drought and climate change.

Some predicted that Australia may never fully recover from the current dry.

Water Services Association of Australia executive director Ross Young said the outlook for capital cities apart from Sydney, Hobart and Darwin, was "not looking good".

"It is going to take a concerted effort to make sure we implement appropriate restrictions and water conservation measures to get through this summer and the next one," he said.

"Around Australia, Brisbane, of all the capitals, is the one that really does have its back to the wall."

He added that Adelaide "has got to ask how reliable the Murray is going to be this summer and next summer, given that the tank really is empty."

Adelaide draws at least 40 per cent of its water from the Murray.

Dr Craik detailed the gravity of the Murray's situation from an "unprecedented combination of low storage levels and low inflows".

The nation's biggest river system is holding 1700 gigalitres less water in storage this year than at the same time last year, the worst on record.

For the towns, communities and farmers of the nation's food bowl, she warned of "significant challenges" ahead.

"We are facing a spring and summer on the Murray like no other," she said.

"It will take multiple years for storages to recover, and the outlook is very grim."

Michael Coughlan of the National Climate Centre indicated vast swaths of the continent had a less than 50 per cent chance of getting their regular rainfall through spring.

Desal plant for SA

The State Government is to build a desalination plant to solve Adelaide's water crisis and is asking for hundreds of millions in federal funding. State Cabinet approval for the plant is expected within weeks. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald has told The Advertiser a report to her by the State Government's Desalination Working Group will form the basis of a submission seeking the federal funding for the new facility.

The plant, to help serve the city's annual water needs, has been estimated to cost more than \$1 billion and will add between \$300 and \$600 a year to household water bills.

"The reason why we've got a working group working as hard as we have at the moment on all the details is to actually go to the Commonwealth to seek money," Mrs Maywald said.

"We have to have a project that is fully developed, with answers to a whole range of questions."

Federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull had urged the State Government to present a proposal for a desalination plant so he could consider helping to fund its construction.

He told The Advertiser this week a desalination plant for Adelaide was "urgently needed" to help the city reduce its reliance on the ailing River Murray.

The Murray Darling Basin Commission this week warned Adelaide faced ongoing water restrictions and Ms Maywald predicted a total ban on garden watering.

34

Mrs Maywald said the main issues to be addressed before any submission was put to the Federal Government included a location, possible environmental problems and how it would be powered.

The working group has identified possible sites at Port Stanvac or at Pelican Point on Le Fevre Peninsula.

Mrs Maywald declined to be drawn on the report's contents, saying she did not want to pre-empt it before taking it to State Cabinet within the next two months.

Cabinet is yet to sign off on the project but she said it could be built quickly once approved, saying: "If you look at Perth, they've built a plant very quickly, they had a site they could go with and now they're looking at having to double the size of that but they can't extend on the current site, they have significant environmental issues where they're putting the brine out to and there's a whole range of things they would've done differently had they had their time over again.

"We're looking at all of those issues. We've got some serious issues with the confines of the gulf - we're not on the open ocean, we've got some serious issues there to work our way through.

"I believe it is responsible of the Government to do the necessary legwork. We've committed in the Budget funding to do the environmental study, which requires us to take 12 months of baseline data before we can start to assess what the brine factor might be."

The State Opposition has promised, if it wins power in 2010, to build a 45-gegalitre-desalination plant to provide 22 per cent of Adelaide's water needs.

Liberal Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith yesterday said without a desalination plant, South Australians "could look forward to a dust-bowl".

"SA should be building the desalination plant now. Mr Rann needs to start building the infrastructure everyone is calling on and he needs to do it with great urgency."

Whilst desalination is seen as the saviour; Once again we must get our heads out of the sand, it creates a waste product that I believe in the end may be seen as a problem in it self and surprise surprise it is massively energy inefficient just contributing to greenhouse gas emission. We **must explore every avenue available – one avenue is IPR (indirect potable re-use) yes we must refine and consume sewage water.**

Pipeline plan - to Tasmania

A plan to pipe billions of litres of pure Tasmanian water to the mainland could be the solution to Adelaide's water crisis.

A Melbourne-based consortium is well advanced with plans for three massive pipelines from Tasmania's north-west into southern Victoria.

Civil engineer Geoff Croker, from Ashwood in Melbourne, said the pipelines could be in place by 2010, well ahead of desalination plants for Victoria and SA. The Bass Pipelines proposal could include flushing the River Murray and providing a new high quality supply to Adelaide and surrounds, as well as Melbourne.

It would also mean a major financial windfall for Tasmania from a resource which currently flows into the sea.

"Someone needs to supply 500 gegalitres of water and it's not going to come from the sky," he said.

"And Tasmania is the only place with 500 gegalitres to spare." Mr Croker said his group included Bruce Robb, who was part of the engineering team on the Basslink undersea electricity cable.

He said they expected to finish design work in November and then go to the market for private capital to fund the project.

Dr Alan Harradine, general manager of water resources for Tasmania's Department of Primary Industries and Water, said the Government was willing to consider exporting water.

A grand plan: When are we going to learn that continued extraction from any area of a resource leads, in the end, too a shortage of that resource. I may be wrong but; **'Climate Change'** is warning us that, we are wrong if we believe that the Earth is too big for us to harm it or that the damage we do will repair itself or the damage is done what can we do now. **We must pull our heads out of the sand, or stop listening to crap, we are the answer we are the custodians, our legacy to future generations is to ensure what we bequeath is a lasting economical and environmentally viable Planet.**

Adelaide Advertiser

HERITAGE MATTERS: Rann misses boat

Premier Mike Rann's comments about water in the face of forecasts by members of the Wentworth group show the State Government still is not full bottle on the issue of water.

WATER CRISIS: Public sees little evidence of action

Salt rubbed into Rann's dilemma

One joke in political circles this week was that the State Government would have to build a desalination plant to rid the River Murray of salt. That is a measure of how the water crisis has spread and now dominating much of the talkback time on radio and in the print media.

35

9th

Newscom.net.au

APEC leaders sign climate deal

The 21 APEC world leaders have agreed "to slow, stop and then reverse" climate change but green groups have slammed the agreement as a political stunt that will do nothing to help the environment.

In a series of tense negotiations, the United States and China have joined other APEC leaders in signing the Sydney Declaration.

It commits the 21 nations to putting an aspirational target at the centre of cutting global carbon emissions after the Kyoto climate change protocol expires in five years.

Agreement a 'failure'

But Greenpeace spokeswoman Catherine Fitzpatrick said the declaration should be named the "Sydney Distraction" on climate change.

"If this statement is the platform we build future climate change action on, the world is in trouble," she told AAP today.

"Because this is a statement with no recognition of binding targets, it has no targets for the future.

"Without binding targets for developed countries, it's little more than a political stunt by the Prime Minister."

Kyoto protocol

The success of the APEC meeting follows strong criticism of Mr Howard's "green" credentials after his stubborn refusal to ratify the Kyoto protocol.

Both Australia and the US are opposed to Kyoto, which set out a global framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, because it did not bind developing nations.

Mr Howard said the declaration acknowledged the need to take a balanced approach to the issue

"The Sydney Declaration . . . is very important in the march towards a sensible international agreement on climate change which recognises the need to make progress, but also recognises that different economies bring different perspectives to addressing the challenge," he said.

The statement by the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit also affirmed that climate change negotiations should take place under the auspices of the United Nations, a demand of China and other developing nations.

A declaration draft says: "The world needs to slow, stop and then reverse the growth of global greenhouse gas emissions."

APEC includes four of the largest emitters of the greenhouse gases that cause global warming – the US, China, Russia and Japan – so the agreement could potentially affect the wider international debate on fighting climate change.

The draft statement included two targets that Australia wanted APEC to agree on. The goal to reduce "energy intensity" – the amount of energy needed to produce economic growth – had been called for by Mr Howard, who put climate change at the top of the summit's agenda.

The declaration also called for greater protection of forests, which absorb the greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

Goals 'non binding'

Both goals are non-binding, in keeping with APEC's voluntary, consensus-based approach.

In a further concession to developing countries, the statement recognises "common but differentiated responsibilities" in combating climate change. This means richer nations will have to bear more of the costs in

cutting carbon emissions.

Overall, the declaration calls for groundwork for a new climate change agreement to replace the UN-backed Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012. A series of meetings on a Kyoto successor will take place in coming months, including at a UN meeting in Bali in December.

But executive director of online activist organisation GetUp, Brett Solomon, said the declaration was a "failure". "It's certainly much weaker than we would have hoped for, even as a worst case scenario," he told AAP.

"The agreement falls so far short of what's required in terms of action on climate change, that these leaders should hang their head in shame."

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) said the declaration was "very weak".

"Today's declaration does not advance global discussions on climate change," ACF executive director Don Henry said.

"History shows vague aspirational goals do not lead to reductions in greenhouse emissions.

"The Kyoto Protocol was established precisely because the aspirational targets of the early 90s failed to stop the spiralling rise in global emissions."

Wheeling and dealing

Aside from climate change, leaders were also expected to issue a statement urging renewed efforts to conclude the floundering Doha round of global trade talks.

36

In the diplomatic rounds that always accompany APEC meetings, Mr Howard and Mr Putin signed a deal on Friday to export Australian uranium to fuel Russian nuclear power plants.

Mr Bush squared off with Mr Putin on missile defence and held a testy exchange with South Korea's Roh Moo-hyun on forging a peace treaty to formally end the Korean War.

Mr Bush, Mr Howard and Japan's Shinzo Abe also held a breakfast meeting yesterday on security issues and this has already drawn criticism from China, which fears military encirclement. - *With AAP*

170,000 can beat ban

More than 170,000 householders are eligible for exemption from the controversial bucket-only outdoor watering ban, it has been revealed.

Under SA Water regulations, everyone who holds an aged pension or Seniors card automatically qualifies for a permit allowing them to water their gardens with a hose.

This represents 15 per cent of Adelaide residents, according to the 2006 Census.

But the Nursery and Garden Industry of SA has warned the exemption policy would lead to more permits, higher water consumption and increased water rage.

Permits, which are issued by SA Water over the phone, allow holders to use hoses to water their gardens and pot plants between 8am and 10am and 4pm to midnight any day of the week. All other householders are restricted to using only buckets or cans to water their gardens.

State Nursery and Garden Industry chief executive Geoff Fuller, who supports the permit policy, said: "Permit holders will use more water with a hose (than bucket), which will undoubtedly put more pressure on water consumption in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

"We have had a lot of elderly people coming to garden centres complaining they are having to let their gardens die (because of the bucket-only restrictions), but we have been advising them they can qualify for a permit."

But Mr Fuller said some permit holders have already been the subject of water rage.

"People with walking frames who were watering during permitted times have been abused by passers-by," Mr Fuller said. "One elderly person was even told to put her permit in an unfortunate spot."

SA Water has already issued almost 10,000 permits since the bucket-only bans came into effect on July 1 – with 2000 granted during the week.

It can expect a rush of applications over the coming weeks as the drought continues. "For an elderly person to gain a permit to use a hand-held hose with a trigger nozzle because they are aged or frail, they must quote their Seniors card or pensioner number to SA Water," SA Water communications officer Courtney Blacker said.

"Also, if people are disabled or have a health problem, which means they are unable to use the bucket or watering can method to water their garden, they can provide SA Water with a doctor's certificate as evidence that they need a permit."

The exemption policy has been ridiculed by the Opposition, which said the revelation that exemptions were handed out to "anyone with greying hair" revealed the "stupidity" of the Rann Government's restrictions regime.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald had "lost control".

"One minute the restrictions were someone else's fault, then the next minute they hand out a bucket-load of exemptions," he said.

"We all know that her bucket rule had nothing to do with saving water – it was just a symbol of how she handles her responsibility."

Ms Maywald, however, said the Opposition's criticisms were misplaced.

"The Opposition is missing the point, which is that we need people to conserve water, not to injure themselves in the process," Ms Maywald said in a statement.

"I value the effort people are putting in to saving water and as a Government, we wouldn't be asking people to save water if the situation did not require it."

She said SA Water's process for people to receive a permit – by calling the utility's hotline number 1800 130 952 – was not designed to be "an onerous task for pensioners or the disabled".

Mr Hamilton-Smith also criticised Ms Maywald's record as an MP before she joined the Rann Labor Government, accusing her of mismanagement.

"Eight years ago, as an Independent MP, Ms Maywald demanded the state develop a long-term plan to deal with future water shortages," he said.

"We now know that in six Budgets the Rann Government and its Water Minister Karlene Maywald have done nothing."

Desal plant hinges on report

No decision has yet been made to build a desalination plant in Adelaide, the State Government said yesterday. Responding to a report in *The Advertiser* that a desalination plant was "on the way", Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said any decision to build a plant to provide Adelaide with fresh water would not be made before next month.

37

"No decision has been made to build a desalination plant yet," Ms Maywald told the *Sunday Mail*.

"The working group's work is on track and I expect them to report (on the feasibility of a desalination plant) in October." She said the State Government's Desalination Working Group report would form the basis of a decision whether to build a plant or not.

Any final decision would need to be approved by State Cabinet, she said. As reported in the *Sunday Mail* in July, a desalination plant big enough to meet Adelaide's annual water needs – and eliminating water restrictions – would lift household water bills by about \$300 a year. Costing an estimated \$1 billion, the plant could be built at Port Stanvac or at Pelican Point on Le Fevre Peninsula.

However, even if State Cabinet decides to build a plant after it receives the report in October, supply of fresh water from desalination is years away, according to fresh water expert and former Adelaide Thinker In Residence Professor Peter Cullen. "Sydney's desalination plant will take about two years to build from the signing of the construction contracts," the Visiting Fellow at CSIRO Land and Water said.

Meanwhile, nursery owners are urging gardeners to sign a petition, calling for the removal of the ban on drip irrigation use, before it is presented to Parliament during the week.

Lockleys Garden Centre manager Craig Taylor, who said drippers were a much more efficient way of watering than buckets, estimated around 80 per cent of his customers had signed the petition.

Downer hails APEC climate change deal

Climate change negotiations at the APEC conference in Sydney have been an enormous diplomatic breakthrough, acting as a catalyst for future action, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer says. The Sydney Declaration on climate change was signed by the 21 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) leaders yesterday. It commits the countries to working towards a long-term "aspirational" goal of reducing global greenhouse gas emissions after the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

Mr Downer says it is a huge achievement.

"This is the first occasion ever that China, which is becoming the world's biggest CO2 emitter, has agreed to any notion of targets at all for developing countries as well as developed countries," Mr Downer told Network Ten today.

"That is, by the way, an enormous diplomatic breakthrough."

Mr Downer said the agreement sets specific goals, including energy efficiency improvements and reforestation at least 20 million hectares in the Asia-Pacific region by 2020.

"To get China, to get Indonesia, to get, by the way, the United States of America to agree to those sorts of things is an enormous step forward in diplomacy," the minister said.

And the Sydney agreement was a significant step forward to helping future negotiations on climate change, he said.

"What APEC has been able to do is be a catalyst to getting countries' positions organised which will lead into the UN meeting."

The United Nations is holding a climate change meeting in Bali in December and another meeting will be held in the US at the end of this month, bringing together the major economies of the world.

But Mr Downer denied the APEC agreement was hypocritical as it saved trees in Asia but did nothing to stop Tasmanian forests being stripped.

"Sounds like the Greens or someone - we're obviously not going to cancel out the whole of the forestry

sector in Australia," he said.

"These kinds of people (the Greens) think we should scrap the timber industry. I mean what sort of a world is that?"

AAP

Sunday Mail

"We want action on water crisis, not more studies"

SA has made a hash of restrictions, says Christopher Pyne

The well's dry, it's time to go Minister

How much longer can Independent MP Karlene Maywald hold down the increasing perilous portfolio of Water Security Minister?

Water Crisis: What Maywald is saying.

Pages of what people are saying as tempers boil over with water bans introduced by the State Government.

How dare you, Minister - The buck(et) stops with politicians - People over-watered with drippers

Water storage hopelessly inadequate - It all started with privatisation & -many more.

38

10th

FarmOnLine

APEC: Climate deal critics ignorant, says PM

Prime Minister John Howard has defended APEC leaders' aspirational goals on climate change, saying it was unrealistic and ignorant to expect countries like China to accept binding greenhouse targets.

Mr Howard hailed the weekend's Sydney Declaration as a "highly significant" step involving the world's biggest polluters which continues the process towards a post-Kyoto accord on global warming.

In the declaration, APEC leaders agreed to work towards an aspirational goal in energy intensity and encouraged members to set their own greenhouse goals and action plans.

It's understood that the wording was finalised on Friday after months of negotiations, with China the last country to agree.

"I can understand the reluctance of the Chinese to commit themselves to specific binding targets but that doesn't mean that sometime in the future that may not happen," Mr Howard told reporters at the summit's conclusion.

"It was unrealistic to expect that out of this meeting you would have a commitment to binding targets," he said.

"Those who set that goal were either ignorant of what is achievable or setting those goals for purely political reasons without any regard to the merits of what is involved."

The prime minister expressed hope the agreement would lead to further progress at coming climate change meetings in Washington and Bali.

"It did represent for the first time the Americans and the Chinese having something to say about an aspirational goal," he said.

"I don't want to overstate it, but it is a step forward."

Mr Howard's colleagues were less cautious in praising the declaration.

"This is the first occasion ever that China, which is becoming the world's biggest CO2 emitter, has agreed to any notion of targets at all for developing countries as well as developed countries," Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told Network Ten.

"That is, by the way, an enormous diplomatic breakthrough."

Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile went further, saying history would record Sydney as the turning point on the climate change issue globally.

The specific aspirational goal agreed to by the leaders was to work towards achieving an APEC-wide cut in energy intensity of at least 25 per cent by 2030 with 2005 as the base year.

Energy intensity targets calculate greenhouse gas reductions in proportion to economic growth, meaning emissions can still rise while the goals are met.

"They allow politicians to talk in apparently high numbers ... but will actually see emissions continue to grow only slightly slower than they otherwise would, when they need to be coming down rapidly," Australian Greens climate change spokeswoman Christine Milne said.

The Australian Conservation Foundation said APEC could reach the energy intensity target 13 years ahead of the target without changing policies, and China's existing goal was more demanding.

"The weakness of the APEC Sydney declaration is a sober reminder to Australia that being one of only two developed countries refusing to ratify Kyoto carries the high cost," executive director Don Henry said.

But the APEC statement had its champions in the resources industry.

"The underlying failure of the Kyoto Protocol is its focus on targets not solutions," Minerals Council of Australia chief executive Mitch Hooke said.

"The Sydney Declaration adds the critical dimension of considering emission reduction targets through the prism of practical solutions within a market-based framework to managing climate change."

SOURCE: AAP

Aust overseas water research flows back to Aust

A new report shows Australian research overseas into better water use in irrigation has been successful in saving millions of litres, and has also been applied successfully in Australia.

"Research projects that substantially draw on Australian expertise have improved water productivity in the Asia-Pacific region," Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Greg Hunt, said today.

Key projects conducted in countries such as China, Pakistan and India are delivering huge water savings for farmers in Australia.

The water management projects are being funded through the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

"The projects have the potential to save enough water to fill six Sydney Harbours every year," Mr Hunt said.

Releasing the report, 'More crop per drop', Mr Hunt said the research had helped to save water in the Murray Darling Basin, the Ord River Irrigation Scheme and the Darling Downs and northern NSW.

The four key ACIAR research projects include:

39

- Growing more rice with less water in the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas.
- Improving irrigation efficiency in the Ord Irrigation Area, northern Australia.
- Sustainable reuse of saline drainage water in the Murray-Darling Basin.
- Boosting water efficiency through conservation tillage and controlled-traffic farming on the Darling Downs and in northern NSW.

"Our overseas aid for crop research is helping to achieve real water savings in Australia by using less water or getting more production out of the same amount of water, or more crop per drop," Mr Hunt said.

"Australia is a world leader in water-resource research."

* The report, 'More crop per drop', is available at: www.aciar.gov.au

SOURCE: Rural Press National Agricultural News Bureau, Canberra.

Climate control hurdles

Australia's decision to pursue a climate change agreement at APEC has been backed by Chinese President Hu Jintao.

But China is continuing to assert that rich nations should shoulder more of the burden for reducing emissions. Marathon discussions on climate change between officials continued yesterday before the arrival of Russian President Vladimir Putin and other APEC leaders in Sydney this morning.

The discussions considered the post-2012 framework for reducing pollution, a new target to improve energy efficiency and measures to stop deforestation.

In a win for Prime Minister John Howard, Mr Hu endorsed a discussion at APEC on an aspirational goal to reduce greenhouse gases.

But officials say the closed-door negotiation was heavy going, and it is still very much up in the air whether the current gulf between developing and developed economies can be resolved.

A senior Japanese official told reporters yesterday the delegations remained divided into:

- The developed world camp, pursuing aspirational targets.
- Developing countries, who are resisting setting specific targets.

He said Japan favoured setting targets to give weight to a post-summit declaration, but stressed they should not be obligatory.

The US has now signalled it will back an APEC-wide target to reduce energy intensity — a significant shift.

But developing economies within the region are resisting efforts to make a concrete commitment at APEC that would pave the way for them to make a greater contribution once the Kyoto framework expires.

Senior Australian officials were pleased with Mr Hu's public backing for a Sydney declaration on climate but stressed there was still some way to go before a communique could be issued by APEC leaders at the weekend.

Mr Hu also discussed climate late yesterday privately with US President George Bush.

In a joint press conference with his Australian counterpart, Mr Hu said the United Nations remained the principal place to resolve a new international agreement on global warming.

He said a UN framework convention on climate change recognised that rich nations should carry more of the burden for reducing greenhouse gases than should emerging economies.

That remains a large stumbling block at APEC. Developing economies are strongly resisting targets, even the loose aspirations on energy efficiency and afforestation being pursued in Sydney.

"We hope that with the release of the Sydney declaration the member economies of APEC will be able to send a clear signal to the international community to show their strong will and common resolve in tackling climate change," Mr Hu said.

SOURCE: *The Age*

Rain needed in next 10 days to save many Vic, NSW crops

The next 10 days will be critical for rain across the southern wheatbelt from NSW across to WA.

A lack of rain and rising temperatures means the decade-long drought has not ended in winter as hoped, following such a dry August.

Many winter grain crops are now seriously wilted.

National Climate Centre head Dr Mike Coughlan says, "It's very difficult to get out of a 10 or 11-year drought in one year."

Dr Coughlan said this year's autumn rain was a "teaser" for winter rain that never came.

"Unfortunately, the back-up rainfall didn't come through," he said.

"The real story of the rain was all the rain, in essence, was just too far east, and, of course, we lost an enormous amount of rain over the ocean.

"Is this part of global warming? Well, one has to say yes."

The dry has been "exceptionally bad" throughout most of central Australia, particularly in western NSW, north-west Victoria, South Australia and southern Western Australia.

40

The north of Australia has had above average rainfalls in a normally dry season, but Dr Coughlan said this did not mean they have received great amounts of rain. The only areas which reaped any meaningful rain were Sydney, south-east Queensland and Gippsland, where it flooded.

The outlook was not particularly encouraging, with only a 50pc chance of above average rain for spring despite the chance of a La Nina weather event forming. Water Services Association of Australia executive director, Ross Young, said Canberra, like other cities, had a promising start to winter with above-average rain in June and July, only to suffer a "terrible" dry and warm August. "Someone turned off the tap in Melbourne and Canberra, especially," he said. SOURCE: *Canberra Times*

AdelaideNow.com

Push to overhaul SA Water

Independent MP Nick Xenophon has joined with the Opposition today to flag plans to overhaul the charter of SA Water. Mr Xenophon and Opposition water security spokesman Mitch Williams said they would move to "radically change water legislation to put an emphasis on saving water rather than it being a 'cash cow' for the Government". Work is being undertaken on proposed legislative changes to the SA Water Corporation Act 1994 and the Water Works Act 1932, which will then be introduced into Parliament.

Under the proposed legislation:

SA WATER would be required to provide monthly reports to Parliament and be subject to regular parliamentary scrutiny.

MOST of the more than \$300 million a year in profits generated by SA Water would be spent on infrastructure and water conservation measures.

EXECUTIVES and board members of SA Water must face at least quarterly scrutiny by a Parliamentary Committee.

In the interim, Mr Xenophon and the Opposition will move for a parliamentary select committee inquiry into the way SA Water operates.

The proposed legislative action will build on the work of Greens MLC Mark Parnell, who as reported last week by *The Advertiser*, plans to introduce a Bill into Parliament aimed at forcing SA Water to focus on conservation "rather than just returning a profit for government".

A key part of his proposed Bill will be setting SA Water a binding annual water conservation target.

Mr Williams said SA Water, with an annual turnover of about \$750 million, was being used as a "cash cow for Government".

"More than \$1.6 billion has been stripped from its earnings in the term of the Rann Government," he said.

"So far the Rann Government has had its head in the sand on water issues. It's time the system that advises it was given an overhaul."

A spokeswoman for SA Water declined to comment, referring inquiries to the State Government.

A spokeswoman for Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said a statement would be issued this afternoon.

River running dry in September

The river bed of the River Murray is dry just across the border in Victoria.

Water has been kept upstream of South Australia as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's management plan to ensure flow across the border in coming months.

State Cabinet within weeks will consider plans for Adelaide's first desalination plant to reduce reliance on the river. The river flow has been checked at Lock 7, between Renmark and Mildura, reducing it to barely a trickle over the past week.

A small channel on one side of the river allows for the passage of small boats through the lock but houseboats are unable to navigate the shallow waters.

Riverland photographer Glenn Milne said "a couple of garden hoses" would squirt more water past the lock.

"There's a huge sand bar that's three-quarters the way across the river and the rest of it is only very shallow," he said.

"There's a bit of a channel that is about two or three feet deep and 30 feet wide but the river's normally probably 300 feet of water."

Lock masters say the river bed often dries out in June when river flows are reduced but it was unusual for the river still to be dry in September when irrigation water usually is released.

Commission chief executive Wendy Craik last week said this spring and summer would be "like no other" since the Hume Dam was built in 1936 to provide a continuous flow of water in the River Murray.

Dr Craik said flows to SA had been reduced to one-quarter of what was received this time last year to save water upstream. "We're trying to save as much as we can in Hume and Dartmouth (reservoirs) upstream and, hopefully, if it rains a bit, catch water which is falling down in the weir pools," she said.

"South Australia's likely to receive increased flows shortly but it would still be below what it would normally expect."

41

Monthly inflows into the River Murray have been below average for the past 23 months.

In August, 360 gigalitres flowed into the river, compared with the long-term monthly average of 1570 gigalitres.

The release of water from Hume reservoir has been as low as possible in winter.

AdelaideNow... Wave-driven desal plant plan

An emission-free, privately-funded desalination plant capable of supplying one quarter of Adelaide's water supply is being considered for the state's coastline.

Perth-based clean energy technology company Carnegie Corporation is investigating building the combined 50 gigalitre desalination plant and 50 megawatt power station at a site in southern Australia.

The \$400 million plant would use wave energy as its source of power. It would be the world's first wave-driven desalination plant and would not produce greenhouse gas emissions.

Carnegie managing director Michael Ottaviano said locations on Eyre Peninsula between Port Lincoln and Ceduna, and the Limestone Coast between Robe and the Victorian border were under consideration.

"We want to go into the area of greatest demand and SA is probably the state with the greatest demand at the moment," he said.

Southwestern Australia, western Victoria and western Tasmania also have been identified as possible sites because of their powerful waves.

The State Government is considering its support for the project as part of its investigation into desalination.

Opposition leader Martin Hamilton-Smith called it an encouraging prospect.

A decision is expected by early November. Construction could begin in 2009.

The plant would become operational in 2011, increasing to full production in 2014.

AdelaideNow... Drought impact cripples farmers

The drought has led to record high grain prices which are crippling the state's livestock farmers.

Pig and dairy cattle farmers across South Australia are facing ruin with the number of sows expected to drop as much as 20 per cent next year - or 10,000 pigs - while dairy farmers struggle with increased production costs.

If significant rain does not fall this spring, consumers also will be hit hard as domestic production drops, resulting in increased prices at the supermarket.

At this year's Royal Adelaide Show, exhibitor numbers of pigs and dairy cattle are comparable with past years but numbers are dwindling on farms.

SA Farmers Federation Pork Committee chairman Butch Moses said prices for feed grain already were at a "premium" with producers paying up to \$400 a tonne.

"This impact is because of the drought but also to do with the world prices for feed grain, which are at an all-time high," he said.

"There is a shortage of feed around the world and the United States is usually a big supplier of corn for the industry but that is being redirected into biofuel."

Mr Moses said pork prices would fall in the short-term as producers de-stocked but, as locally-produced pork decreased, the consumer price would increase. "If the industry shrinks too small and you can't supply domestic demand, prices are going to go up," he said.

Jervois dairy farmer Cheryl Liebich said production costs were outweighing the milk price being paid to them by wholesalers, which is about 40c per litre.

"Normally, our break-even price is about 35c per litre but the cost of production is so high at the moment (up to 70c/litre) because of high grain prices and a lack of available water," she said.

"This particular corridor along the River Murray is badly affected by the drought and we know of three dairy farmers in the area who have quit in the last month.

"There are others seriously considering doing the same thing and we will have to cut our numbers if we are to continue dairy farming."

Pig producer Shaun Blenkiron, of Keyneton in the Barossa Valley, said it was difficult to expand his pig farm with grain prices so high. "We've got 70 or 80 sows at the moment but we're looking to grow to about 120 sows," he said.

"But to get to that target it's been really hard with the feed prices going up so much.

"If this season ends up like last year it's going to be tough for a lot of people."

Keep water supply above party politics

The partisan politics of a federal election year have hijacked the critical need to safeguard South Australia's water supply and revive the River Murray.

At the start of the year, Prime Minister John Howard announced his \$10 billion water security plan, including a federal takeover of the management of the Murray-Darling Basin and a buy-back of irrigation licences.

Of course, this was a political act by Mr Howard designed to set the agenda for the year. In response, the states created the veneer of co-operation but an apparently orchestrated campaign eventually resulted in Victoria blocking the deal.

42

Mr Howard's critics argued he had taken 11 years to produce a Murray rescue package.

Critics of state Labor governments argued they were denying Mr Howard a victory in a bid to support Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd.

Amid the argument, the River Murray is still screaming out for help.

Now, state Liberal leader Martin Hamilton-Smith suggests the Rann Government is deliberately delaying its decision about a desalination plant for Adelaide.

Mr Hamilton-Smith accuses Mr Rann of biding his time until he can help Mr Rudd confirm a plant's construction as a federal election promise.

He bases this on the State Government's intention to seek federal funding for a desalination plant.

It is important that the necessary studies and costings be completed before State Cabinet commits to a desalination plant.

Yet it is also important that Mr Rann not allow the perception to be created that this vital decision is being delayed because of partisan politics.

South Australians are frustrated and angry at the State Government's political failure on water. There is no hard evidence to suggest Mr Rann is delaying a decision for the sake of political interests.

If he is, then he risks the wrath of voters.

SA's water supplies – and the Murray in particular – have been the subject of too much partisan squabbling for too long.

These critical issues for the state's future are too important to become captured by partisan interests.

AWA

The restructure of Queensland's water infrastructure will see local government retain responsibility for the distribution of water through one distribution body and sale of water to consumers through up to 10 retailers that will mirror new council boundaries. The State will take control of the major dams and water sources plus the Water Grid, once completed. A council-owned body will retain supply and drainage networks.

The Murray Darling Basin Commission is warning that up to 2 million Australians in its lower catchment are facing the worst summer of water restrictions and shortages in 70 years with some scientists predicting the region may never fully recover.

AWA's Water Education Network has developed a national Water Education Resources Directory and is encouraging community and school education providers to add details of their resources and/or programs. The aim is to enhance networking and prevent reinventing the wheel when developing new resources. To become an approved provider please complete the online form at ([Website](#))

Through additional funding, the West Australian Government has continued its commitment to the Natural Heritage Trust Phase 3 (NHT3), which replaces the national Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and phase two of the NHT, enabling the state to formally complete negotiations with the Australian Government. In Western Australia, NHT3 will be implemented through the current regional delivery model, addressing issues such as WA's water security.

The Victorian Government is providing \$50,000 under its 'Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) Regional Specialisation Program' to the City of Greater Geelong for a 'Recycling of dye-house waters' project involving

Geelong-based textile companies Melba Industries and Brintons Carpets which has an innovative solution to treat and recycle wastewater.

A river management project initiated by the NSW Murray Wetlands Working Group (MWWG) has won the prestigious \$100,000 National Thiess Riverprize. The working group has successfully delivered 75,000ML of water to more than 200 wetlands over 71,000 hectares in the Murray and Lower Murray-Darling catchments, through a number of grant schemes to provide individual landowners, community groups and Government agencies with financial assistance to manage and rehabilitate natural wetlands.

The World Health Organisation is attempting to collate the research being done around the world into small community water supplies. If you are involved (or know someone who is) in research relevant to small community water supplies, please complete the table on the AWA website and email to Stephanie Mairou ([Email](#)) by close of business on Thursday 13th September.

The Queensland Government has announced that announced that towns, feedlots, power stations and mines would be allowed access to 17,200 ML of Great Artesian Basin water, which is being released after completion of the Water Resource and Resource Operation Plans for the Basin. Access will be in accordance with licensing requirements.

43

Sinclair Knight Merz, in association with Gold Coast City Council (GCCC) joint project 'The Coomera and Nerang Rivers Hazard and Vulnerability Study' has received a Queensland Spatial Excellence Award, in the Research and Development category. The project will assist GCCC and emergency services deal with future floods.

Australia's research-project partnerships with developing countries have delivered benefits to Australia. Four of the 98 aid projects conducted by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research have resulted in water-savings in the Murrumbidgee and Coleambally Irrigation Areas; Ord River Irrigation Scheme; Murray Darling Basin; and the Darling Downs.

The Water Development Department of Cyprus believes that building three new seawater DESALINATION plants by 2013 will solve the island's potable water shortage. In the meantime, the Government is constructing a temporary plant to produce 20 ML of drinkable water per day.

China could soon adopt reforms that remove caps on fines for firms that dump waste into water, a change that would put more pressure on polluters to stop polluting whose caps sometimes apply at a level lower than the cost of installing & operating remedial equipment. Once polluters max out the fines, there is also little incentive for them to stop.

Environment and Water Minister Turnbull considers that a huge water auction on the fragile Warrego River should be reviewed in the light of a CSIRO reports saying that its flows could be cut by up to a third in the future.

Private infrastructure lobbyists claim that private business has been shut out of a multi-billion-dollar restructure of Queensland water infrastructure after the Beattie Government bowed to pressure to allow councils to retain their retail monopoly.

According to eWater CRC, the application of a proper business approach to environmental flows and freeing up the rules for private ownership and management could play a key role in ensuring the long-term ecological sustainability of Australian rivers.

Hopes for a La Nina weather pattern, the rain-inducing flipside of El Nino, are fading according the Bureau of Meteorology.

11th

FarmOnLine

CSIRO water report shows up climate modelling

The release of the first of the CSIRO Sustainable Yield studies in the Murray Darling Basin for the Warrego catchment in western Queensland has highlighted the enormous uncertainty of climate change modelling, according to the QFF. The Warrego River has been at the centre of a political storm, with the Queensland Government planning to sell more irrigation entitlements from the river, to be extracted only during high-flow years. But green groups have opposed the plan, calling for cuts to water entitlements across the Basin. QFF chief executive John Cherry said the report was too conditional on assumptions and conflicting modelling outcomes to be treated as a definitive policy trigger.

"CSIRO's 'best estimate' is that climate change could mean by the year 2030 a reduction in inflows into the Warrego catchment of 6pc," Mr Cherry said.

"However that is within a wide range, with 40pc of the climate change models shows increases in inflows (up to 44pc), and 60pc showing decreases (of up to 28pc)," he said.

"It would be very difficult, in the face of such uncertainty, for any Government to use such a heavily hedged conclusion to argue for cuts to water availability to farmers.

"This study introduces a major level of uncertainty into the water planning process of how Governments will react in developing the Basin Plan for the Murray Darling."

Mr Cherry called upon both Labor and the Coalition to commit to fully compensating farmers for any loss on irrigation entitlement on the basis of the report.

But Federal Member for Maranoa, The Nationals' Bruce Scott, has welcomed the CSIRO report, interpreting as a confirmation that cross-border flows are being met and that the river is healthy.

"Findings in the reports indicate water can be auctioned off without any damage to the overall health of the river and the Murray-Darling Basin," Mr Scott said.

"The CSIRO analysis used the allocation of the eight gigalitres of currently unallocated water, which is due to be auctioned later this month, in its calculation of the cross-border flow.

44

"Additionally the report found the frequency of beneficial small floods reaching the environmental asset of the Yantabulla Swamp and important high flows to the Warrego River Waterholes has not been affected by water resource development."

SOURCE: *Queensland Country Life*, weekly rural newspaper, posting news updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

Drought and imports push pig farmers to the brink

The prolonged impact of drought, record levels of pig meat imports into Australia and a strong Australian dollar have brought the pork industry to its knees.

Australian Pork Limited (APL) chief executive officer, Andrew Spencer, said the three factors have come together to create the worst operating environment for Australian pig farmers in living memory.

"The greatest impact has been the skyrocketing price of feed grains," Mr Spencer said.

"Added to this have been record levels of imports displacing Australian-grown pork, particularly in the manufacturing sector.

"At the same time the high dollar has been responsible for slowing pork exports to major export markets like Singapore.

"Pork normally destined for Singapore has been pushed back onto our already oversupplied domestic market."

In dollar terms Australia's pork industry is bleeding at a rate of around \$3-4 million per week in losses, Mr Spencer said.

Producers are currently losing on average more than \$30 per pig sold.

SOURCE: APL and *Queensland Country Life*.

Dry end to winter derails SA crop fortunes

A dry end to winter and a run of hot, northerly winds in recent weeks threatens to totally derail the cropping season for producers across western and upper Eyre Peninsula, SA.

Wheat and barley crops, which make up the majority of the region's overall harvest, are now in need of urgent falls before the end of spring if yields are going to be any better than the disappointing 2006 harvest.

Around Kimba, farmers are still hopeful of a worthwhile spring and summer reap.

But further north to the semi-marginal areas around Buckleboo, many crops will not be harvested, with cereal paddocks across the district now offering little more than grazing feed for stock.

Peas have also been adversely affected, with a run of frosts reducing predicted yields.

However, many farmers' burdens will be eased with valuable cash flow secured from the spring and summer turn off of prime lambs.

While throughout the 1990s many producers moved towards continuous cropping, the value of retaining a mixed-farm enterprise incorporating wool or prime lambs is increasing in light of the prevailing dry conditions.

SOURCE: *Stock Journal*, SA's weekly rural newspaper, posting news updates daily on *FarmOnline*.

adelaidenow.com.au

\$2.5bn water solution

The State Government will build a desalination plant and double Mt Bold reservoir at a cost of more than \$2.5bn to secure the state's water supplies.

In a major statement, Mr Rann says the desalination working group had been investigating both a 50 gigalitre desalination plant and a doubling of the Mt Bold reservoir at a cost of \$820m.

Mr Rann said the pricing of water to SA households would have to be reviewed as part of the development.

In the biggest infrastructure development in the State's history, the government would proceed with both. The statement follows Mr Rann's earlier announcement that water restrictions on drippers and hand-held hoses would be eased from October 1

"Based on interim reports of the group, the government's preference is to build both in an investment of more than \$2.5bn," Mr Rann said.

"We do not intend to make a decision about such a massive investment lightly or without the best available information before us.

"We intend to do this properly instead of some slap-dash plan as proposed by the Liberal opposition. That would be negligent and irresponsible."

Cabinet hoped to have sign-off by November this year after considering the final report of the desalination group in October.

Building the desalination plant was extremely costly and complicated. It was not as easy as writing a press release, Mr Rann said.

Its final cost would depend on where it was located, how the brine it produced was dispersed and from where the energy to power was is drawn.

The desalination plant could cost in excess of \$1.54bn and would supply 25pc of Adelaide's annual water supply.

Unlike the Perth plant, the SA Government would build it on a site that would allow it to double in size if necessary.

44

Dripper ban lifted

Premier Mike Rann has announced water restrictions will be eased from October 1 with the ban on drippers and hoses lifted on weekends.

Gardeners will no longer be forced to use buckets to water their gardens and can use drippers or a hand-held hose for up to three hours on weekends.

THE CHANGES FROM OCTOBER 1:

DOMESTIC consumers will be able to use drippers or hand-held hoses with a trigger nozzle for three hours per week, from either 6am to 9am or 5pm to 8pm.

EVEN numbered houses will be able to water on Saturdays and odds on Sundays.

THE current ban on sprinklers will remain.

IRRIGATORS' allocations will be increased to 16 per cent.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said today the issue had always been a "moving feast".

"It's dependent upon the rain that falls into the catchments," she said.

"There are two important messages here. One is how we manage the day to day. We have two catchments, what we actually do is we track the catchments in the Adelaide-Mt Lofty and we have a graph there that says how much water we expect to get in the Mt Lofty ranges.

"We actually match that up with what we're likely to get in from the River Murray to supplement that.

"Under a worst-case scenario we actually saw that we would need 141GL from the River Murray for critical urban needs.

"Now, we still need that water, but what has changed is that we've had an extra 11GL available to us in the Mt Lofty catchment."

But Mrs Maywald said Adelaide's water crisis was "certainly not over".

"That's a bad message to be sending out to people," she said.

"The crisis is certainly not over. We're still in a very, very critical situation with the River Murray and we need to be very vigilant in saving water.

"This is great news that we're able to give a little bit of relief to gardeners. We'll still be very vigilant and we'll be monitoring it on a monthly basis."

She said the decision to ease restrictions was made after a final review of "all the data" from August.

She said it was "really important" to review the issue on a monthly basis so any extra available water could be distributed fairly.

"We don't want this drought, we don't restrictions – what we do want to be able to do is give water to people when it becomes available when it falls into the catchment. We don't want to over-impose restrictions when it's unnecessary."

The weather bureau said the Adelaide plains was "well below" the winter average for rainfall, with 156GL compared with average of 228GL.

The Adelaide Hills catchment was also below average.

Mrs Maywald said the slight improvement to the forecast "worst-case scenario" allowed for a review of water restrictions.

She denied the changes were driven by public pressure.

"Not at all," she said.

"If you look at the Premier's statement when he introduced for the first time into Parliament that we were going to have to put a ban on sprinklers and drippers outside, he said it was a 'temporary ban to save water for the winter months'.

"Now, we know we that we have a drier period coming up, we didn't want to use all the water over winter, we wanted to tighten the belt so we could save as much as we could for the winter months."

Maywald should be sacked - Liberals

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said the dripper bans were a stupid mistake from the start – made worse by blaming them on Prime Minister John Howard.

"For weeks, Karlene Maywald has been saying the bucket-only restrictions were an edict from Canberra but today's backflip has exposed those assertions as an untruth," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

"Minister Maywald has deceived South Australians for weeks and the backflip has done nothing to ease the anger of gardeners.

"Premier Rann's backflip is an admission that Minister Maywald has mismanaged the water portfolio and she must be sacked.

"Minister Maywald may still have the confidence of Premier Rann over her handling of water but does she have the confidence of Caucus?

"Premier Rann was nowhere to be seen on water for weeks. Now he has left Minister Maywald out to dry while he steals the limelight."

Mr Hamilton-Smith said the Premier's claim that the bucket bans were overturned due to extra rainfall in the Adelaide Hills has been exposed as a fraud by the Bureau of Meteorology.

On ABC radio today, the bureau confirmed that winter rainfall has been below average in the Adelaide Hills while the Adelaide Plains are significantly below average.

Mr Hamilton-Smith said the Government had run out of answers to solve the water crisis.

"In contrast, the State Liberals have released a 19-point water plan to reduce our reliance on the River Murray and end water restrictions in South Australia," Mr Hamilton-Smith said.

"By investing in infrastructure such as desalination plants as well as recycling waste water and storm water we can harness an extra 132GL a year."

What the ministers say

QUESTION: What is your personal view on a desalination plant for Adelaide?

MIKE RANN: Undecided. The Desalination Working Group, that was set up by the Government in March this year to look into the feasibility of a desalination plant for South Australia, will be reporting to Cabinet next month.

KEVIN FOLEY: Undecided. I will wait for the working group's report before making a decision.

PATRICK CONLON: Undecided. I am waiting for the report. Unlike the Opposition, we prefer to be a sensible Government and deal in fact.

PAUL HOLLOWAY: Undecided. Whether a desalination plant makes sense for Adelaide will depend on a full analysis of the economic and environmental impacts.

MICHAEL ATKINSON: Unavailable.

JOHN HILL: Undecided. The Government is considering desalination and will make a decision in due course.

MICHAEL WRIGHT: Undecided. The Government is committed to exploring all options to secure Adelaide's water supply. I will express my personal views within the Cabinet room.

JANE LOMAX-SMITH: I support the Government's commitment to investigate available options, including desalination.

JAY WEATHERILL: This is a matter for the Water Security Minister and Cabinet but I support the investigation of all options so that the final decision is made using all the available facts.

RORY MCEWEN: On leave.

KARLENE MAYWALD: Undecided. Any responsible Government would need to properly investigate the implications of desalination for Adelaide before making a commitment. This is exactly what is being done, through the Desalination Working Group.

CARMEL ZOLLO: As a Cabinet Minister, I don't feel it's appropriate to canvas issues due to be formally considered by Cabinet.

JENNIFER RANKINE: Undecided. It's under active consideration.

PAUL CAICA: I support the Government's commitment to explore all the options to secure SA's water supply, including desalination.

GAIL GAGO: I support the State Government's commitment to exploring all options to ensure the future sustainability of our water resources.

Polar bear faces extinction – WWF

Polar bears face extinction due to persistent inaction by the international community in the face of climate change, conservation group WWF has warned.

Their charge follows a series of reports by the US Geological Survey last Friday which said melting Arctic sea ice due to global warming could cut the polar bear population by two-thirds over the next 50 years.

"We now have official confirmation that the largest living land predator is going to go extinct in our lifetime," said a statement from Neil Hamilton, director of the WWF's arctic program.

Polar bears depend on sea ice as a platform to hunt seals, their primary food. But sea ice is decreasing throughout their Arctic range due to climate change.

Models used by the US team project a 42 per cent loss of optimal polar bear habitat from the polar basin during summer, a vital hunting and breeding period, by mid-century, the studies said.

However, the WWF said the prediction of a two-thirds population loss was "almost certainly an underestimate ... because of the consistent underestimates in sea-ice loss (about 25 per cent) of current models."

Mr Hamilton said governments had to do more than just wring their hands at the prospect of the extinction of such a well-known and well-loved species.

"Politicians are fiddling at the edges while the Arctic wilderness succumbs to global warming; but in the meantime, they are sending one of the world's greatest species on its way to extinction," he warned.

The WWF's call came as the UN special envoy on climate change warned that time was running out for rich and poor nations alike to rescue the Earth's stressed climate system.

46

"It seems that the weather has become destabilised already. And while we watch, the glaciers are retreating. The Arctic is melting ... The world only has a short window of opportunity," Gro Harlem Brundtland told ministers from the Group of Eight (G8) industrialised nations meeting in Berlin.

The former Norwegian prime minister said all nations needed to be included in a new treaty under the United Nations Framework on Climate Change to replace the Kyoto Protocol on cutting greenhouse emissions, which expires in 2012.

The Australian

Garrett backs down on pulp mill emission tests

Peter Garrett has backed down on his suggestion that federal Labor could subject the Gunns Tasmanian pulp mill proposal to an analysis of its greenhouse gas emissions.

The ALP's federal environment spokesman had suggested that the Tamar Valley mill could pull the party's proposed "trigger" requiring greenhouse impact assessment of projects producing more than 500,000 tonnes of CO2 a year.

When challenged this week to clarify whether Labor's greenhouse trigger would apply to Gunns's pulp mill, Mr Garrett said: "The trigger would apply to the establishment of any industrial plant or other facility which emits, or is likely to emit, more than 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide or carbon dioxide equivalent per year."

There was no suggestion at the time that the reference to "any" project precluded Gunns's project, which is strongly backed by the forestry union and state Labor.

Yesterday, apparently after the intervention of Kevin Rudd's office and a backlash by timber groups and pro-logging Labor MPs, Mr Garrett issued a statement saying Gunns was exempt because it had already lodged its approval application.

"If Labor is in a position to assess the existing pulp mill proposal, Labor will apply exactly the same legislative provisions that Mr Turnbull is currently applying," Mr Garrett said. "Any future changes to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act under a Rudd Labor government will not be retrospectively applied, and will therefore not impact proposals that are currently under assessment."

Gunns insisted its project would reduce CO2 emissions by 1.3 million tonnes per annum. It says its logging operations are greenhouse neutral, while burning waste wood for power and shipping fewer woodchips will reduce emissions.

But the federal Department of Environment and Water has concluded the mill's operations will contribute to greenhouse gas emissions, the Green Institute estimating it will generate 10.2million tonnes of CO2 a year.

"It's very clear that Kevin Rudd has interfered to pull a rug out from any pretence that Labor would do anything different from the Government when it comes to climate change," Tasmanian Greens senator Christine Milne said.

Lib risks chop over forest claim

TASMANIAN federal Liberal candidate Ben Quin last night risked disendorsement by claiming forests may be worth more as carbon offsets than as a supply source for Gunns' proposed pulp mill.

Mr Quin, censured by party chiefs at the weekend for opposing the mill, told The Australian the value of Tasmania's forest resource for carbon offsets should be a key part of the mill assessment.

His comments were backed by the Wilderness Society, which has preliminary figures estimating the native forest available for logging in Tasmania contains 400 million tonnes of carbon.

The Tasmanian Government has entered into a heads of agreement to supply Gunns with two million tonnes of woodchips from state-owned forests each year for 20 years.

The price will be kept secret as commercially sensitive. However state-owned Forestry Tasmania has said it is no secret that the average native forest pulpwood price is \$12 to \$14 a tonne.

Forestry Tasmania has also said that for the \$2 billion mill to be internationally competitive, Gunns would need to limit its expenditure for the resource to the "bottom 25 per cent price quartile".

Mr Quin said that as both major parties federally had committed to carbon limits and carbon trading in coming years, Tasmanians needed to know that the Gunns wood supply deal offered them the best return for their resource. "We might be signing up to a wood supply agreement that locks the price of that forest for pulp into something that is only a fraction of what it is potentially worth tomorrow," Mr Quin said last night.

"The carbon trading price is about \$20 a tonne - that's where it's expected to start - so the same tree that is about to be sold for \$9 to \$12 a tonne for pulp wood might be worth more by simply leaving it there.

"If BHP needs something that offsets their mining in Queensland and are willing to pay \$40 a tonne for pulpwood by leaving it in the forest, we should consider it. It is the reality of the day."

Mr Quin is Liberal candidate for marginal Lyons, which takes in the West Tamar region, home to many wineries and organic producers opposed to the mill.

He said he was not proposing locking up forests, pointing out that using them for sawn timber building products was far more carbon-friendly than pulp.

47

The Wilderness Society has commissioned research on the potential carbon offset value of Tasmanian native forests available for logging.

Society national forests campaigner Sean Cadman said preliminary estimates were that these forests contained 400 million tonnes of carbon.

"Assuming a carbon price of \$30 per tonne, and applying the appropriate discounts, that values the resource at about \$10 billion," Mr Cadman said.

"That's a very superficial analysis but it shows that this assessment needs to be done.

"We are acknowledging that protecting forest in Indonesia is worth putting \$30 million into, and we support that, but the same situation applies in Australia because Tasmania's tall wet forests are the most carbon-dense vegetation in Australia."

Greens senator Christine Milne produced legal advice that the federal Government could use its existing external affairs powers to assess the greenhouse gas impact of the mill.

Lost chance on deforestation

A strategy to prevent deforestation in Asia should have been the primary goal of the Sydney Declaration on climate change ahead of aspirational targets on energy efficiency, says a leading group of environmental scientists.

Chinese news reports yesterday were upbeat about the climate change agreement sealed at APEC, saying it would have a positive effect on post-Kyoto negotiations later this year in Bali.

But Peter Cosier, director of the Wentworth Group of concerned scientists, said despite an agreement to help rehabilitate large areas of forests in Indonesia APEC had lost an opportunity for institutional reform to halt deforestation in the region.

Mr Cosier said immediate cuts in greenhouse emissions could have been delivered if APEC had worked harder to secure a range of bilateral agreements between developed and developing countries to halt deforestation.

Deforestation is responsible for about 20 per cent of global greenhouse emissions, and accounts for about 80 per cent of emissions from developing economies such as Indonesia. "I think APEC would have been a spectacular opportunity to move that one forward and it didn't," he said.

Greg Hunt, federal parliamentary secretary to the Foreign Minister, said the Sydney Declaration represented the best global reforestation agreement undertaken to date. "Reforestation is the most effective way, at this point, to quickly capture billions of tonnes of CO₂ - and it does so by improving our natural habitat," he said.

Global negotiations on climate change will culminate this year in the next meeting of the UN convention on climate change, in Bali in December.

The Bali meeting will host 191 countries to negotiate a post-Kyoto framework for when the protocol expires in 2012. Australia is one of 16 countries that have not ratified the agreement.

State-owned broadcaster China Radio International said yesterday the APEC summit "took the international community a further step towards sustainable development".

China News Service, a government agency, asked: "Without specific targets in emission reduction, can there be any substantial significance in the APEC declaration?" It said: "Chinese experts think yes, there can. With APEC members comprising 60 per cent of the world's economy, if they can apply innovative technology and reduce

energy consumption while maintaining high-speed economic development, then it will have a positive effect on global warming."

Herald Sun

Farming devastation looms

Farmers are facing an unprecedented rural crisis within the month unless big spring rains arrive, federal Agriculture Minister Peter McGauran said today.

"Unless there are spring rains in the next three to four weeks of substantial volume then Australia will have an agricultural and rural crisis on its hands like never before," Mr McGauran said.

The Bureau of Meteorology will tomorrow release its latest outlook and despite repeated forecasts that the drought bringing El Nino would soon be replaced by La Nina's rain, Mr McGauran said he held out little hope for a break.

"There's been too many predictions from the bureau that have raised expectations or hopes in the past.

"If by some miracle their predictions are more accurate this time then that will be a bonus.

"Otherwise, everybody else is preparing for the worst. It's a rapidly deteriorating situation in many parts of Australia."

Mr McGauran highlighted central west NSW, the northern quarter of the West Australian wheat belt and the southern Murray-Darling Basin as most in need of rain.

"The government is deeply concerned at what appears to be, now, inevitably a failed season across many regions and states."

The federal government is now paying out \$27 million every week across 23,000 families as part of its exceptional circumstances program which helps farmers living in drought declared regions.

Exceptional circumstances funding would continue indefinitely, Mr McGauran said.

48

"There's no capping of the exceptional circumstance payment scheme.

"The wider community want the government, on behalf of taxpayers, to continue to support drought affected farmers.

"The worry is that even income support and interest rate subsidy won't be enough for citrus growers having to bulldoze their orchards and dairy farmers having to disperse their herds."

Mr McGauran's dire warning came as a Victorian government funded report raised the prospect of a ban on local cricket, because of safety concerns, unless spring rain arrived.

That situation was a worst case scenario, but a definite possibility, Cricket Victoria Game Development general manager John Watkin said.

"It's not something we are wanting and we will be okay until Christmas," he said.

Farmers splash out

Desperate farmers are buying water at a cost of almost \$1000 a megalitre to sustain their crops through worsening drought conditions.

And many irrigators are selling their water allocations on the market to supplement their dwindling income.

Spring season trading on the Watermove website, which controls water transactions for Victorian water trading zones, began last week with a record water price set for the Murray Valley system.

Goulburn-Murray Water business and finance manager Trevor Ierino said the pool price for the temporary water on the Murray system was \$977.50 per megalitre.

"For the Murray system that's well and truly a record," he said.

"For water to start that high so early in the season, it's a significantly high price for this time of the year."

Just over 253 megalitres of water was traded on that system - a total of almost \$250,000.

GMWater announced last week irrigators on the Murray system would receive just 5 per cent of their water allocations this season.

On the Goulburn system, farmers have been allocated 17 per cent while Loddon and Campaspe irrigators had their allocation cut to zero.

Water levels in the Murray Darling Basin, which supply the irrigation water for hundreds of Victorian farmers, are lower than at the same time last year. Inflows into the system are expected to become worse during spring, the traditional filling season.

Mr Ierino said the price was set by the market, but the dry conditions had definitely pushed it up.

"Now we are in September normally there's a bit of hope for rain in the spring and people don't often pay a high price for water," he said.

"But with the lack of rain and uncertainty, people are more likely to be buying."

One hectare of mature citrus trees needs about 10 megalitres of water a year to survive.

Victorian Farmers Federation president Simon Ramsay said the price of water was going to be inevitably high this year but it was out of reach for many producers.

"I think people in the dairy industry would struggle to pay that price, but people in the horticulture industry are obviously forced to water their permanent plantings," he said.

"People are also looking at selling as a way of providing some sort of additional income. I don't think it was unexpected given the current conditions."

The National Climate Centre is predicting another dry spring with just a 40 per cent chance of above average rainfall and an increased chance of warmer weather.

Plug it, farmers say

Landholders struggling to weather drought are angry at being asked to shell out \$280 to attend a forum extolling the benefits of the north-south pipeline they fear will cripple their water supply.

The northern Victorian farmers last night faced off with proponents of the plan to pump water from Eildon to Melbourne at a tense public meeting in Kyabram.

Irrigators from Eildon to Yea, part of the Plug the Pipe campaign which staged a barricade of Premier John Brumby in a machinery yard near Bendigo last week, met to voice their outrage over the proposal, They say it rips water from their farms to prop up Melbourne's water supply.

Many farmers were angered to receive an invitation in the post to attend the two-day Foodbowl Unlimited Forum, convened by the Shepparton-centred Foodbowl Alliance, which would detail the advantages of the water infrastructure upgrade in seminars later this month at a cost of \$280 per attendee.

Rochester farmer of 40 years Geoff Elliott said the price and schedule of the forum were unrealistic.

"The cost is prohibitive, and no one has that kind of time to take off at this time of year," he said.

"Though it would be in our interests to attend to learn more about the wool they're trying to pull over our eyes."

David Glass, who runs the family farm first worked by his grandfather at Nanneella 18km outside Rochester, said local irrigators had no faith in the State Government's assurances that the new water infrastructure would be a boon for them and would not deprive them of water.

50

"You can't trust (Premier John) Brumby on his figures," he said.

"They refuse to do an independent audit to prove where the savings are -- they're not there.

"We're in a majorly stressed Goulburn system which has no water anyway. We've got to pay for full water right now and we've only got 17 per cent.

"This is people's livelihood, people's farms, local communities and small businesses. It's our future. Milk factories, food factories. Everyone's jobs will be at risk."

Dairy farmer Alistair Gibson fears he won't be able to run the property his family has worked since early last century on the paltry water allocations of recent times.

"We will be priced out of the market (for water allocations). We can't compete against cities and some of the higher value crops."

The farmers believe the State Government's assertion that the water to be carried by the pipeline will be new water savings is false. The Government says the pipeline will save 450 gigalitres a year now lost to seepage, evaporation and other inefficiencies, with those savings to be split between irrigators, Melbourne and the environment.

They insist the drought means there are no water savings to be made and the water to be pumped away from the region will be old water already being used in agriculture.

However the Foodbowl Alliance says irrigators will benefit from the financial investment in local water infrastructure.

Growers desperate for rain

Victorians have been warned to brace for increased water restrictions and higher food prices as drought conditions are tipped to worsen.

And experts say Australia may not fully recover from the drought because of increasing pressure from global warming.

Farmers face ruin without decent spring rains and a number of crops are already starting to wilt as soil moisture dries up.

While some of the state appears awash with green, the drought is far from over and the outlook for spring is grim.

At a drought briefing yesterday, National Climate Centre director Dr Mike Coughlan said global warming was putting increasing pressure on Australia's water supplies and agriculture industry.

"Australia is up there with much of the rest of the world and perhaps even ahead of the rest of the world in terms of the rate at which temperatures are rising," he said.

"It is difficult for us to base predictions on historical records, because over a 30-year period the climate at the beginning is quite different to the climate at the end."

He said the strong rainfall in July, particularly over much of Gippsland, had been a tease.

"The situation is exceptionally bad," he said.

"Unfortunately the back-up winter rainfall didn't come through as we were hoping."

The lack of rain has had dire consequences on both urban and rural water supplies. Inflows into the Murray-Darling Basin, which supplies the irrigation water for hundreds of Victorian farmers, are expected to worsen over the coming months.

Murray-Darling Basin Commission chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said water levels were lower than at the same time last year.

"The situation is deteriorating: 65 per cent of our inflows occur between July and October," she said.

"The probability of receiving average inflows for the rest of the year is actually very small."

Some Victorian farmers are already facing a spring with zero water allocations.

About 60 per cent of Australia's agricultural land is in federally declared Exceptional Circumstances zones, in which farmers receive government support.

Victoria has only a 40 to 45 per cent chance of above-average rainfall in spring.

In northern Victoria, Picola farmer Keith Holland, 46, said the drought was worsening and farmers were on a knife-edge.

"There's a lot of damage done already, and if it doesn't rain it will be straight-out disaster," he said.

Mr Holland, whose property had been in his family since the 1870s, said he was afraid he may see the end of the family legacy.

He said people were starting to offload stock and there was a shortage of grain and fodder. "Feed will be so scarce and so expensive, I don't think people will be able to afford to keep too many breeding stock," he said.

"That's the scary part. Last year there was fodder reserve, but it's not there this year.

"There will be big ramifications if we don't get rain in the next fortnight."

Water bans 'may never end'

Australia may never fully recover from the current decade-long drought due to climate change, experts have warned.

50

The nation was facing a "new reality" of harsh water restrictions and a new climate with run-offs and river inflows the first casualty, speakers at today's Bureau of Meteorology national post-winter update said.

It was also revealed that although above-average rain fell along Australia's east coast in June-July, August rainfall in the southeast had been "terrible".

Areas affected by drought included nearly all population centres with Adelaide and Brisbane most vulnerable, although Sydney had enjoyed a bumper winter of rain.

Two months of rain was not enough to stop a 10-year drought and the outlook was grim due to "human-induced" climate change, the Bureau's National Climate Centre head Dr Mike Coughlan said.

"It is difficult for us to base predictions on historical records because over a 30-year period the climate at the beginning is quite different to the climate at the end," he said.

The immediate problem for Australians affected by drought and water restrictions was to get needed strong rainfalls in spring, with October traditionally the wettest month of the year.

The chances of that happening were good in Western Australia (50 to 55 per cent), but less so in Victoria and South Australia (40 to 45 per cent), with a 50 per cent chance between Sydney and Brisbane.

Good spring rain would stop storage levels in Australian capital cities dropping further, with Melbourne (39 per cent), Brisbane (20 per cent) and Canberra (43 per cent) all at lower levels than 12 months ago.

Dr Coughlan said a hoped-for La Nina weather pattern, bringing cool, wet weather, had so far been mostly wasted, occurring too far to the east over the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean.

High temperatures in August had added to the problem, Water Services Association of Australia executive director Ross Young said.

"Someone turned off the tap in Melbourne and Canberra, especially," he said.

"Population growth in all capital cities exacerbates the problem, and we will grow by another 65 per cent by 2050."

The Murray river's inflow and storage levels are at record-low levels with daily inflows not having exceeded the long-term 116-year average once in 2007.

This affects South Australia particularly, which is currently receiving a quarter of average inflows and relies on the river for 40 per cent of the state's water.

"The outlook is very grim and it will take years to recover," Murray Darling Basin Commission chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said.

Of Australia's agricultural land, 50 to 60 per cent was drought and exceptional circumstances declared, with farmers in those areas having received \$1.85 billion in assistance so far.

Victorian Premier John Brumby said his Government would discuss possible further assistance for farmers at a community cabinet meeting in the Buloke shire, in Victoria's northwest, this month.

Mr Brumby said it was too early to know whether Melbourne would need to move to stage four water restrictions. Speakers at the briefing said food prices and water bills would rise due to the drought.

Grim outlook on rain

Households and farmers have been warned of continued water shortages and higher fruit and veggie prices as the horror drought drags on. Climate and water experts today delivered a bleak outlook for coming months as hopes of more desperately needed rain evaporate. The grim assessment comes amid debate over imposing tougher water restrictions in Melbourne. National Climate Centre head Dr Mike Coughlan said struggling farmers were in for further heartbreak as global warming played havoc. Dr Coughlan said winter floods in East Gippsland, Sydney and south-east Queensland had turned out to be a tease. And an enormous amount of rain had fallen too far east of Australia and out into the ocean rather than on parched land. Dr Coughlan said the forecast for the next three months was "not particularly encouraging". "The drought is certainly not over," he said. Victoria has just a 40 per cent chance of above-average rainfall from September to November. A record warm start to the year across southern Australia and several years of dry conditions meant much rain simply evaporated once it hit the earth. Murray Darling Basin Commission chief executive Dr Wendy Craik said the situation was severe, with inflow and storage levels incredibly low. Conditions had deteriorated and the impact on irrigators would be significant, Ms Craik warned. Lake levels were likely to fall to record lows as temperatures started to rise again, and the risk of algal blooms and salinity was high. Ms Craik said it would not be surprising if fresh produce prices increased in the coming year as supplies dried up. "It is going to take multiple years for our storages to recover and the outlook is very grim," Ms Craik said.

51

Water Services Association of Australia executive director Ross Young said good spring rain was urgently needed to top up storages. Mr Young said regional areas on harsh water restrictions would continue to do it hard. But he said it was too early to say whether Melbourne should adopt tougher bans and stage 4 restrictions. Mr Young said imposing harsher bans at this time of year would be ineffective as outside water use was already low. Melbourne's water storages are at 38.7 per cent. The climate conference was told more than half of Australia's agricultural land is now covered by Federal Government exceptional circumstances grants. Desperate farmers have received \$1.85 billion in emergency funds to try to stay afloat. The Victorian Government this year announced a \$5 billion plan to improve the state's water supplies, including building a desalination plant at Wonthaggi.

Adelaidenow.com

Iemma defends failing emissions scheme

NSW Premier Morris Iemma has admitted the state's world-first carbon emissions trading scheme was failing, but said today the Federal Government was to blame.

The NSW Greenhouse Gas Abatement Scheme (GGAS) was launched in 2003 when the emitted carbon price in NSW was \$11 per tonne.

Credits were given to companies for cutting greenhouse gas emissions and could be sold to offset the carbon production of other companies.

With carbon now trading at \$6 per tonne, the once green jewel in the State Government's crown is untenable and on the verge of collapse.

Mr Iemma said the GGAS was in crisis because the Federal Government's imprecision over its yet to be implemented emissions trading system caused the price to plunge.

"We now have a difficulty with it (the GGAS) because of the stupidity of... the absence of telling us what the price and rules will be on the national scheme," he said today.

The Commonwealth's push for the federal system, when implemented, to dissolve state-based carbon trading schemes was another reason carbon prices dropped, he said.

Greenpeace spokesman Ben Pearson said Mr Iemma was correct in part, but lax rules also contributed to the scheme's failure.

"It is pretty clear some big retailers are flooding the market with credits. They've stopped buying and are just selling," Mr Pearson said.

"And why would you buy when you don't know how long the NSW scheme will be running for?"

"There is no clarity about a transition between state and federal trading systems."

But Mr Pearson said the NSW Government compounded its problems with weak rules that allowed an oversupply of carbon credits. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW said the State Government had brought on the carbon price collapse.

"The collapse of the market has been caused by the NSW Government handing out credits too freely," executive director Cate Faehrmann said.
Greens MP John Kaye said the Lemma Government didn't create enough demand for prices to remain competitive. "The Lemma Government stands condemned by the market it created," Mr Kaye said.
"It has failed to drive real reductions and wasted money on a paper market that is now in failure."
"Meanwhile, emissions continue to grow."
He recommended a carbon tax as a better alternative.

12th

FarmOnLine

Most want renewable energy by 2020: ACF

Nine out of 10 Australians believe a quarter of their electricity should come from renewable energy by 2020, a survey has found. According to Newspoll figures released by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) close to 90pc of the 1,200 adults contacted for the phone poll over the first weekend in September, agreed that Australia should aim to produce 25pc of the country's electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The strongest support for that target was from people in the 35-49 age group (94pc). Ninety three per cent of respondents living outside the major cities agreed Australia should aim to become a world leader in renewable energy. ACF executive director, Don Henry, said Australia was well endowed with renewable energy resources, like sun, wind and geothermal hot rocks.

"An overwhelming majority of Australians want our political leaders to do more to get our electricity from renewable energy so we can get on with the job of cutting greenhouse pollution and tackling climate change," he said.

"Last week's APEC meeting wasted a great opportunity for Australia to provide a leadership role in the region on renewable energy and to set a strong target that would drive immediate large scale public and private investment in renewables.

53

"Australians want to green-up our energy. With a federal election looming it's now up to the major Australian political parties to show they are committed to a strong mandatory renewable energy target."

SOURCE: AAP

Water Minister sticks to plans for weir

Rising salinity levels in the lower reaches of the River Murray could ruin the proposal for a temporary weir near Wellington, SA, according to a weir protest group.

However, SA Water Security Minister, Karlene Maywald, does not see the rising salinity levels as a reason to take the weir off the agenda.

Since the beginning of August the salinity level measured at Murray Bridge has steadily risen from 510EC on August 1 to the latest measurement of 550 on August 31.

A salinity level of 900 is the recognised standard for acceptable human consumption, based on taste.

Lower Lakes and Coorong Infrastructure Committee chairman Neil Schillabeer says, "It would not take long to exceed this level if the government goes ahead with its plans to build a weir.

"If salinity levels are rapidly increasing in the river without a rock structure being constructed, then it is pretty obvious that water quality behind a weir would not be good enough for Adelaide's water supply."

Mr Schillabeer said the weir would block the river's ability to flush the salinity and nutrient load into lakes Alexandrina and Albert.

Minister Karlene Maywald, however, said salinity would impact on the quality of the water but the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and World Health Organisation Guidelines for drinking-water quality were based on taste, not health considerations.

"Salinity would not impact the effectiveness of the temporary weir ... (it) is designed to ensure our pumps can still access water if the drought continues, regardless of salinity levels," Minister Maywald said.

She said that, ideally, the salinity should be below 910EC.

Typically, river water above the Lower Lakes meets this requirement.

SOURCE: *Murray Valley Standard*

Adelaidenow.com.au

Three possible sites for desal future

The State Government has identified three possible sites for a desalination plant to supply 25 per cent of Adelaide's fresh water.

As revealed in *The Advertiser* on Saturday, a desalination plant will be built to help solve Adelaide's water crisis.

Premier Mike Rann yesterday told State Parliament a desalination plant for Adelaide and increasing the capacity of the Mt Bold Reservoir was "the Government's preference for our long-term water security".

Mr Rann said the cost of both projects, which had been investigated by the Government's Desalination Working Group during the past six months, would be more than \$2.5 billion.

Federal Government funding to help pay for the projects will be sought.

The 50GL desalination plant would cost more than \$1.4 billion, with Mr Rann warning the high cost of stainless steel and growing demand for desalination infrastructure means "the cost of building a desalination plant quickly would be at a premium".

The plant will be located at either Pelican Point, near Port Stanvac, or further south along the coast, and take up to five years to build.

"We would plan to build on a site that allowed it to double in size if necessary in future years," Mr Rann said.

One of the biggest costs associated with the plant is expected to be a pipeline laid under the seabed into the Gulf St Vincent to carry the plant's waste brine. "I am told such a pipeline could be many kilometres in length," Mr Rann said. "That engineering work alone would be an enormous and expensive undertaking."

New pipelines also will be needed between major northern and southern metropolitan water system facilities, so fresh water from the plant can connect directly with mains water and also flow into filtered water storage, and be fed from one system to another.

Mr Rann warned the desalination plant will have "an ongoing impact on the cost of water" because the plant needs to operate around the clock. "Water pricing will need to reflect this significant investment in infrastructure," he said.

The Mt Bold proposal is estimated to cost more than \$850 million. Mr Rann said given water run-off in the Mt Lofty Ranges was a significant source of Adelaide's water supply, increasing water storage capacity in the Hills from one year to two "makes sense".

New water measures fall short

A desalination plant and reservoir expansion do not go far enough to "waterproof" Adelaide, scientists warned yesterday.

University of Adelaide Professor Mike Young said stormwater management, groundwater limits and water pricing needed to be addressed.

54

"Doubling the capacity of Mt Bold assumes that you can get the reservoir filled and we can't be very assured that will happen," he said.

Wentworth Group scientist Professor Peter Cullen said neither option would provide Adelaide with water in the short term.

Desalination would provide a more reliable water source but water reuse and recycling could be implemented in a shorter time frame.

University of South Australia Professor Chris Daniels said he preferred water recycling and water sensitive urban design.

Australian Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry said desalination should be a last resort because of the environmental implications of running plants. "We would prefer the government putting money and energy into restoring Murray flows."

\$1.5bn pulp mill go-ahead

The Government's controversial Penola Pulp Mill Bill was passed in the Lower House yesterday with the support of the Opposition.

The Bill allows a \$1.5 billion pulp mill to be built in the state's South East without being subjected to normal planning rules. Critics of the proposal have warned it will cause significant damage to the environment.

Leader of Government Business in the Lower House, Patrick Conlon, told Parliament the pulp mill was an important project.

"My understanding is that if a pulp mill under these circumstances cannot be built, it is unlikely you will build any sort of pulp mill in the South East and I do not think anyone believes we should not be using pulp products," he said.

"The truth is we will always have an appetite for them."

Opposition Forests spokesman Mitch Williams said amendments had been made to the Bill which had addressed concerns about the mill. "We will be proposing a Bill which in a way meets the aspirations of virtually all the stakeholders and satisfies legitimate community concerns," he said.

Outspoken critic of the proposed mill Greens MLC Mark Parnell said he was disappointed the important Bill took just two hours to pass the House of Assembly. "We were told Parliament was the highest level of scrutiny, yet two hours of debate was all they managed. What a disgrace," he said.

"Using Parliament to rigorously assess this \$1.5 billion project was always the wrong way to go.

"My line hasn't changed from day one. A project this size must be subject to a proper environmental impact study."

Credit due on Premier's water vision

For months, The Advertiser has been pressing the State Government to outline a workable and long-term plan to safeguard South Australia's precious water supply.

On Saturday, we revealed that the Government planned to build a desalination plant which would reduce SA's

dependence on River Murray water.

Premier Mike Rann has responded to intense public pressure, spearheaded by The Advertiser, to detail a credible plan to safeguard the state's supply.

He is to be commended for yesterday unveiling a comprehensive strategy, even if full details of costings, site and logistics are still to be revealed.

Nothing is more important to Adelaide and regional SA than a constant, reliable supply of potable water.

Investment in SA will evaporate if there is even a suspicion that relatively cheap, reliable water supplies cannot be guaranteed. Half a century ago, the then Premier, Sir Thomas Playford, recognised this when he had the vision to link SA cities and towns by a series of pipelines to the River Murray.

It was a radical concept which allowed SA to compete, in both rural and industrial markets, to guarantee economic growth and prosperity.

But the Murray is no longer the answer. It has been spoiled, if not ruined, by over-use and greed.

Mr Rann has produced the new-century version of the Playford plan - desalination and additional Hills water storage.

He has said SA's population could reach two million by 2050.

The combined assets of hills reservoirs and pumping from the Murray cannot sustain population growth, with a complementary industrial growth, of this magnitude.

The plan is right. But it will come at a cost. Domestic, rural and industrial users will have to pay more for water. Increased prices, particularly for water above a certain basic amount, will in turn make people more conscious of what they use.

We will, at last, become individually accountable for the water we use.

But from the frustration of annoying, short-term restrictions has emerged a sensible and workable long-term plan.

History may one day acknowledge that Mr Rann's announcement yesterday may ultimately be his greatest and most significant achievement.

55

Drought continues across SA

The Bureau of Meteorology will tomorrow release its latest long-term rain outlook.

But the forecast is unlikely to confirm a break in the drought that has plagued southern Australia for much of the decade. A key rain indicator, the Southern Oscillation Index, has stubbornly refused to move towards a more positive rain position.

Despite the index, trade winds, cloud patterns and the temperature in the Pacific Ocean are all pointing toward a La Nina weather event - the opposite to the current El Nino-driven drought.

However, the bureau's late August outlook said La Nina would still arrive in 2007.

"All the dynamic computer models predict La Nina conditions for the rest of 2007 and declining to neutral thereafter," the August 29 Outlook said.

adelaidenow.com.au

Long wait for \$2.5 billion water rescue plan

South Australia's \$2.5 billion water rescue plan - which includes a metropolitan desalination plant - could take up to 10 years to complete. Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald today said full details of the plan, which also involves a doubling of storage capacity at Mt Bold reservoir in the Hills, would not be revealed until November. That is when a feasibility study into the two-pronged scheme, backed yesterday by Premier Mike Rann, will be presented to state Cabinet.

Mrs Maywald said the plant could be built within five years, possibly sooner, and definitely before 10 years. The plant will cost more than \$1.4 billion.

She said the pricing of water remained under review, but that "increased infrastructure will lead to increased prices for water".

Consumers could expect a price increase for water before the plant was finished because "we don't, all of a sudden once we turn the water on, put a huge impost on people", she said.

"But how much is still being determined and that will be subject to a Cabinet decision," she added.

One option is a move to a pricing regime based on actual consumption - rather than the current system, which is heavily weighted towards a supply charge based on property value.

Mrs Maywald said the State Government "would certainly accommodate" federal Water Resources Minister Malcolm Turnbull's request for a formal submission for Federal Government funding for the project.

"Whoever is the appropriate person in the Federal Government after the Federal Election will receive a submission from the South Australian Government," she said.

Premier Mike Rann yesterday described as "inevitable" the building of two desalination plants, one for Adelaide and another to service the Olympic Dam mine, Whyalla and the Eyre Peninsula.

He also promised an \$850 million expansion of the Mt Bold reservoir to double Hills storage capacity.

Mr Rann said the desalination announcement was "a prediction and a promise", although he added that a final

decision on the Adelaide plant would not be made until November when Cabinet will have seen a report from a working party examining the proposal.

Sites at Pelican Point, Port Stanvac or further down the coast on the Fleurieu Peninsula under consideration.

Mr Rann said the Government had been examining a desalination plant and expansion of the Mt Bold Reservoir over the past six months and, based on interim reports, the preference was to build both.

"This will be the biggest capital works project ever seen in the state's history," he said.

A final site will depend on the report of the working party - headed by former Premier's Department chief executive Ian Kowalick - and environmental concerns.

It will take about five years to build the 50-gigalitre plant.

Mr Rann also warned the cost of building the infrastructure would have to be reflected in the price of water and, as a result, the Government was reviewing its water pricing options.

Also yesterday:

THE Government's plans were condemned by Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith as an "embarrassing rehash of old Labor policies" and policy made on the run.

IT was announced that water restrictions, although eased from October 1, would remain in place in the short term because of the time necessary to build the new infrastructure.

SA Water has been directed to prepare a detailed proposal for incentives for household water savings.

The Government has been under immense public pressure over the past few months to ensure future water supplies for SA and to review tight restrictions that have banned the use of drippers and forced householders to irrigate with buckets.

Mr Rann and Mrs Maywald bowed to the pressure from householders and the Labor Party's backbench yesterday, announcing the restrictions would be eased and that from October 1 this year, domestic consumers would be able to use drippers or hand-held hoses with a trigger nozzle for three hours a week - from either 6am-9am or 5pm-8pm on weekends.

56

The water issue dominated the first day's sitting of the current parliamentary session yesterday, with the Opposition accusing the Government of a monumental backflip on desalination and water restrictions.

But Mr Rann said building a desalination plant was an extremely complex and expensive undertaking.

"Its final cost will depend on where it is located, how the brine it will produce is dispersed, where the brine is dispersed and from where the energy to power it is drawn," he said.

"A 50-gigalitre desalination plant around the size of the plant operating in Perth, that would supply about 25 per cent of Adelaide's fresh water, could cost in excess of \$1.4 billion, about five times more than the cost estimated by the Opposition Leader.

"We would plan to build on a site that allowed the plant to double in size if necessary in future years."

Adelaide Advertiser

Credit due on Premier's water vision

For months, The Advertiser has been pressing the State Government to outline a workable and long-term plan to safeguard South Australia's precious water supply.

On Saturday, we revealed that the Government planned to build a desalination plant which would reduce SA's dependence on River Murray water.

Premier Mike Rann has responded to intense public pressure, spearheaded by The Advertiser, to detail a credible plan to safeguard the state's supply.

He is to be commended for yesterday unveiling a comprehensive strategy, even if full details of costings, site and logistics are still to be revealed.

Nothing is more important to Adelaide and regional SA than a constant, reliable supply of potable water.

Investment in SA will evaporate if there is even a suspicion that relatively cheap, reliable water supplies cannot be guaranteed.

Half a century ago, the then Premier, Sir Thomas Playford, recognised this when he had the vision to link SA cities and towns by a series of pipelines to the River Murray.

It was a radical concept which allowed SA to compete, in both rural and industrial markets, to guarantee economic growth and prosperity.

But the Murray is no longer the answer. It has been spoiled, if not ruined, by over-use and greed.

Mr Rann has produced the new-century version of the Playford plan - desalination and additional Hills water storage.

He has said SA's population could reach two million by 2050.

The combined assets of hills reservoirs and pumping from the Murray cannot sustain population growth, with a complementary industrial growth, of this magnitude.

The plan is right. But it will come at a cost. Domestic, rural and industrial users will have to pay more for water.

Increased prices, particularly for water above a certain basic amount, will in turn make people more conscious of what they use.

We will, at last, become individually accountable for the water we use.

But from the frustration of annoying, short-term restrictions has emerged a sensible and workable long-term plan. History may one day acknowledge that Mr Rann's announcement yesterday may ultimately be his greatest and most significant achievement.

AdelaideNow... Premier knows it's time to act

Premier Mike Rann has obviously been listening to the Rolling Stones, especially Time Is On My Side. He is still more than two years away from an election and, even though water is a major electoral issue, he is hoping by March, 2010, it will no longer register on the voters' radar. That is why the Premier, who can sniff any changes in the political wind more astutely than most other MPs, has seized the opportunity to make his announcement about a desalination plant for Adelaide, coupled with what appears to be a monumental backflip on water restrictions. He knows by making the announcements now, even though he has been avoiding commitments to either in the past few months, the current political argy bargy and the issue of whether the Government dithered on the issues will be long gone by the time the election comes around.

Last year, when then Opposition Leader Iain Evans proposed a desalination plant for Adelaide, he was roundly condemned by the Government and accused of not doing his costings. Then followed statements from ministers about how a plant should be a last resort and would dramatically raise water prices.

As pressure increased because of the drought, the Government position changed, resulting in a working party to examine a plant for Adelaide. Still, the Government said no decision would be made until after the working party reported later this year.

At the weekend, an Advertiser report that the plant would be built was denied by the Government only to have Mr Rann and Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald announce yesterday that SA would get not one, but two desalination plants.

57

In two years, once progress has been made on the plant, the row over desalination could well be a distant memory. One man who won't forget will be Iain Evans and he will be able to take a lot of the credit for goading the Government into going down the desalination path.

delaidenow.com.au

New water measurers fall short – Prices to rise under \$2.5bn water rescue plan

A desalination plant and reservoir expansion do not go far enough to "waterproof" Adelaide, scientists warned yesterday.

University of Adelaide Professor Mike Young said stormwater management, groundwater limits and water pricing needed to be addressed.

"Doubling the capacity of Mt Bold assumes that you can get the reservoir filled and we can't be very assured that will happen," he said.

Wentworth Group scientist Professor Peter Cullen said neither option would provide Adelaide with water in the short term.

Desalination would provide a more reliable water source but water reuse and recycling could be implemented in a shorter time frame.

University of South Australia Professor Chris Daniels said he preferred water recycling and water sensitive urban design.

Australian Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry said desalination should be a last resort because of the environmental implications of running plants. "We would prefer the government putting money and energy into restoring Murray flows."

13th

The Australian

Engineers call for Kyoto ratification

Australia must ratify the Kyoto Protocol before or at the next round of global climate negotiations in Bali in December, the nation's peak engineering body said today.

Engineers Australia is calling on the federal Government to sign the document and create a greenhouse gas stabilisation policy, which includes interim and long-term emissions targets and a robust emissions trading scheme. "Australia will experience climate change impacts regardless of its own policy," the report released earlier today says.

"Continued reluctance by other nations to act is as great a danger to Australia as its own lack of action.

"Australia needs to accept responsibility for reducing its own emissions, and to actively engage the global community to encourage early and decisive action."

Business and the general public wanted stronger action on climate change, the report says.

"Despite large outlays for greenhouse gas reduction programs, Australia has barely begun the task of reducing

greenhouse gas emissions."

The Kyoto Protocol, with its defects, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change were, at present, the only comprehensive international mechanisms aimed for focused global action on climate change, Engineers Australia chief executive Peter Taylor said.

Mr Taylor said the APEC Sydney Declaration went some way to demonstrate leadership by Australia in the climate change debate, but it had "failed to provide tangible examples of Australia's bona fides".

Adelaide Advertiser

Water bills will rise – soon

Householders will pay more for water years before a desalination plant - to supply 25 per cent of Adelaide's fresh water - is built, State Government warns.

The 50GL desalination plant will cost more than \$1.4 billion and take up to five years to build.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald yesterday said "increased infrastructure will lead to increased prices for water", while Premier Mike Rann said "there is absolutely no doubt South Australians will have to fund the expansion of our water infrastructure".

"We will have to pay for our long-term water security," he said.

It has been estimated the desalination plant will add \$300-\$600 a year to household water bills.

Mrs Maywald said consumers should brace for water price rises before the plant was finished, because "we don't, all of a sudden once we turn the water on, want to put a huge impost on people".

"But how much (of a price rise) is still being determined and that will be subject to a Cabinet decision," she said yesterday.

Mrs Maywald in July announced SA Water was conducting a review into SA's two-tier pricing system for households amid claims water prices were too cheap.

Water users pay 50c for the first 125 kilolitres. For residential consumption over 125kl, the price rises to \$1.16 for every kilolitre (1000 litres) of water. The cost is set on an annual basis.

58

One option being considered by the Government is a move to a pricing regime based on actual consumption. The current system is heavily weighted towards a supply charge based on property value.

A spokeswoman for Mrs Maywald said it was uncertain if the review, being conducted by SA Water, would be completed in time for the mid-November State Cabinet sign-off on the details of the desalination plant, including its location. The review was likely to be finished by the end of the year, she said, when a recommendation on water pricing would be sent to Cabinet for approval. Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said the Government had already announced a 32 per cent increase in water prices over a series of years.

"The Government needs to justify to South Australians why it has already taken \$1.6 billion out of SA Water over the six Budgets during its time in office, while saying they will dramatically and significantly increase water prices," he said.

"Everybody can see why water prices will need to go up. But the Government must justify why one-third of everybody's water bill currently goes into general revenue."

World wars over water

Scientists have predicted for years that world wars of the future will be fought over water.

The first water war broke out in Parliament on Tuesday. Yesterday, we had the second, and don't be surprised if Water War III erupts today.

During Question Time yesterday, the Opposition, led by Martin Hamilton-Smith (and he knows something about military tactics) asked 13 water questions.

Premier Mike Rann, Infrastructure Minister Patrick Conlon and Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald took the brunt of the assault and, despite a couple of hits, did not appear to suffer any career-threatening wounds.

Nor did the Opposition when the Government fired back.

Mr Hamilton-Smith scored a hit when he read out a statement made by Treasurer Kevin Foley less than two months ago that it would be "reckless" for any decision to be made on a desalination plant without fully investigating the options.

So, Mr Hamilton-Smith asked, how could the the plant be announced while the working group set up to investigate the issue still had not presented its report.

Mr Rann deflected the salvo by saying his comments on desalination had the total support of the Treasurer and, indeed, the entire Cabinet.

He returned fire by continually referring to the original Liberal costing of \$450 million for a desalination plant, saying the costs were actually five times that.

Rush for slice of action

Companies hoping to build South Australia's promised desalination plant have made formal and informal approaches to the State Government.

Pelican Point power station operator International Power wants the desalination plant next to its power generator. It

operates combined power-desalination plants in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Construction company John Holland managing director David Stewart said the company, a partner in desalination projects on the Gold Coast and in Sydney, would look seriously at Adelaide.

Other companies believed to be interested in building and operating the proposed plant, which could cost more than \$1.5 billion, are United Water and Multiplex, which built Perth's desalination plant. Also yesterday:

PREMIER Mike Rann said state taxes would not have to rise to pay for the infrastructure and it would have no Budget impact.

THE Democrats accused the Government of failing to go after \$2 billion in water buyback money from the Commonwealth's national water plan.

WATER industry experts said it would cost about \$86 million a year to run a 50GL desalination plant and the cost of producing water from the plant would be around \$1.90 a kilolitre.

OPPOSITION Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith said there had already been a blowout in the cost of the Government plan to expand Mt Bold reservoir from \$850 million to \$1.1 billion.

Government sources said yesterday there were approaches from firms over the proposed plant but said the Government would not yet be drawn on sites or funding options.

When he announced the plant on Tuesday, Premier Mike Rann said he would not rule out building the plant as a public-private partnership. But Government sources said it was likely SA Water would have overall responsibility for the plant's construction, possibly in a private partnership.

Water bills in WA are expected to rise by about \$30 a year to help cover the cost of that state's new plant, on top of the \$28 that was factored in for the original plant.

Adelaide company Osmoflo's national operations manager Kim Falster said the State Government should not overlook local expertise.

The Adelaide firm built SA's second seawater desalination plant for residents at Marion Bay.

59

Good idea but elsewhere

Residents near the proposed sites for Adelaide's desalination plant say they do not want it built in their area.

The State Government is considering Port Stanvac, Pelican Point and the Fleurieu Peninsula coast as potential locations, but local residents yesterday said they were concerned.

Peter Biggs of Hallett Cove said he'd rather the plant was sent somewhere else. "I think further down the coast, away from population centres would be far better," he said.

Melissa Perryman, who was fishing yesterday near Port Stanvac, said the Government was on the right track.

"It's about time the Government used (Port Stanvac) for something instead of the refinery," said Ms Perryman, of Morphett Vale. Karin Sarkis, of Hallett Cove, said the plant was a good idea but not ideal for Port Stanvac. "We're happy to get more water to use but not at the expense of how this area looks."

Hanna Grant of North Haven said Pelican Point was a new marine precinct and could not afford to have a desalination plant located nearby.

Plea by residents on climate

Local Governments & Elected Members please take note.

Residents groups across Adelaide have joined forces to call on councils to do more to tackle climate change.

The Community Climate Change Coalition - resident groups including Norwood, Unley, Port Adelaide and Grange - wants councils to improve environmental practices.

Coalition spokesman Alan Shepard said while some councils had taken steps to reduce the effects of climate change, more needed to be done.

"They've done some good things in the last three years, but I think they can go further," he said. "It's hard to be critical of all councils, but some are really dragging their legs."

"Councils can do a lot to tackle climate change and they need to be leading rather than following."

Bernadette Bean, a member of the Norwood residents association, said the coalition stemmed from a number of residents who did not think their councils were doing enough.

"Instead of waiting for them to tell us what we can have, it's about us telling them what we want in regards to climate change," she said.

The coalition will hold a free climate change public forum at 7.30pm next Wednesday at Norwood Town Hall.

Experts will give advice on ways the public can take action at work and at home.

Mr Shepard said the forum was designed to empower people to make a difference at a local level.

"The whole focus of the forum is a very positive thing, it's not about criticising," he said. "Because there's a crisis, everyone from councils to business and individual people have to raise their game," he said.

Use N-power for desal plant

The State Government has been urged to run its proposed Adelaide desalination plant on nuclear power.

International expert Professor Leslie Kemeny said nuclear power plants were "uniquely suited" to seawater

desalination.

"If South Australia wants a plant with minimum greenhouse gas emissions, you should eventually go nuclear," he said.

"It is the answer to desalination."

Professor Kemeny, a founding member of the International Nuclear Energy Academy and former consultant to resource giants Western Mining and Hamersley Iron, was yesterday one of three speakers at an Adelaide nuclear energy forum sponsored by the Property Council.

Council executive director Nathan Paine attacked Premier Mike Rann for "refusing numerous requests" to explain why he had ruled out nuclear power in SA.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith addressed the forum, as did the chairman of the Federal Government's 2006 Review of Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy, Dr Ziggy Switkowski, and international anti-nuclear campaigner Dr Helen Caldicott.

Dr Switkowski said the nuclear power debate would "go on the backburner" for a long time if Labor won the next federal election.

He said a Rudd Government would stifle the debate, even though he said Australia had to consider the nuclear option if it wanted to "decarbonise" the economy, yet still improve living standards.

This was despite the fact national demand for energy would double by 2050, as would greenhouse emissions at a time when more and more countries around the world were introducing nuclear power.

Thirty-one countries now operate 443 nuclear reactors, generating 15 per cent of global electricity needs.

Mr Rann yesterday stood by his refusal to consider nuclear power. "We've already ruled out nuclear power for South Australia," he said.

"It would massively increase the cost. It's the last thing we need."

60

14th

FarmOnLine

Conservation group to bid on Warrego water

The newly established Water Conservation Fund will try to buy at least half the 8000 megalitres of Warrego River water entitlement the Queensland government is auctioning next week and leave the water in the river.

It has the support of downstream graziers in NSW who fear diverting the water for irrigation will reduce the frequency and size of floods they rely on to promote pasture growth on flood plain areas of their properties.

Federal assistant Environment and Water Resources Minister, John Cobb, and NSW Environment and Water Minister, Phil Koperberg, have also both spoken out against the controversial auction.

Members of the Warrego River Water Users are meeting in Enngonia today (Thursday) to discuss the auction and to donate money to the Water Conservation Fund, which the NSW Nature Conservation Council is setting up to buy water for environmental uses.

Environmental scientist and chairman of scientific advisory panel to the trust, Professor Richard Kingsford, said the fund was seeking to raise money to buy as much of the 8000 megalitres as possible.

He said there would be two auctions, each of 4000ML, and in one each bidder was allowed only one 500ML block, so the fund would be restricted to a maximum of 4500 ML.

This week, Queensland Natural Resources and Water Minister, Craig Wallace, rejected an appeal from Federal Water Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, not to go ahead with the controversial auction.

The Federal Government has previously declined to block the auction as a lever to gain Queensland's support for the Prime Minister's \$10 billion plan to restore the Murray-Darling Basin, but Mr Turnbull made his appeal after release of a CSIRO report on future water availability in the Warrego in the light of climate change.

The report indicates future water supplies are highly uncertain, with estimates ranged from a 30 per cent decrease to a 47pc increase, but with a "best bet" estimate of a 7pc decline.

The report found existing water resource development had not affected the frequency of beneficial floods reaching the Yantabulla swamp and high flows in the Warrego River water holes (both in NSW).

"What this report is telling us is that we in this particular part of the basin we will need to have a flexible management regime in place to ensure we can adapt and manage our water in an environment of uncertainty," Mr Turnbull said.

He said the CSIRO analysis had assumed the allocation of the eight gigalitres up for auction, but given the high level of uncertainty in the estimates he encouraged the Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie (who will retire this week) to reconsider his decision to proceed with the auction.

But a spokesman for the Mr Wallace said Queensland's water planning was done by "experts" and the CSIRO report had not said the sale should not go ahead.

He said almost 90pc of the Warrego River's flow crossed the border into NSW- a figure NSW graziers have

disputed.

"These graziers - what's their expertise beyond saying they don't believe it?" the spokesman said.

But chairman of the Warrego River Water Users, Bill Ridge, of "Tuon", Enngonia, said he had done his own comparisons of two flood flows at Cunnamulla Weir in Queensland and at gauging stations on the NSW-Queensland border on the Warrego River and Cuttaburra Creek (which splits from the Warrego below Cunnamulla.)

He had found only 37pc of a medium peak flow at Cunnamulla was crossing the border a few days later and 52pc of a high flow.

SOURCE: *The Land*, NSW

NSW crops: one week left

Up to half the NSW winter crop is in jeopardy unless rain falls in the next week, the State's Primary Industries Minister, Ian Macdonald, said today.

Mr Macdonald said with 71pc of NSW still in the grip of drought, half of the five million hectares of winter crop planted this year could be lost.

"The situation is that grim for farmers," Mr Macdonald said.

"The fact of the matter is August was mostly dry through the State's cropping belt and that could have a devastating impact.

"And every day this situation continues the worse it will get for our farming communities."

Mr Macdonald said the latest Department of Primary Industry monthly figures show 71pc of NSW in drought (down from 75.8pc), 15.7pc is marginal (up from 14.6pc) and 13.3pc is satisfactory (up from 9.6pc).

"The only part of the State to receive any decent rainfall during August was the eastern third of NSW, in particular the eastern corner north of Wollongong and west to Narrabri," he said.

"There was no rain at all across most of inland NSW last week.

The total dam storage levels in rural areas are at 21.1pc.

61

"Some areas are faring much worse than others; for example Brogo Dam near Bega is near full while Keepit Dam near Gunnedah is only at 14pc capacity, while the Menindee Lakes near Broken Hill are at three per cent.

For more information on available assistance contact the drought hotline on

1800 814 647 or check the website www.nsw.dpi.nsw.gov.au/drought

SOURCE: *THE LAND*, NSW.

MPs warn of drought crisis

Rural MPs have this week been trying to raise awareness among their parliamentary colleagues of the crisis facing farmers in the next three weeks if significant rain doesn't fall across nearly all farming regions in the country. Sky-rocketing feed-grain and water prices, next to no water available for irrigation in the Murray Darling Basin and crops on the brink of failure in all States are all too much of a reality for farmers, but have slipped off the mainstream radar for the media and many politicians.

And while John Howard's leadership of his party and dire polls just days out from an election were expected to dominate yesterday's joint meeting of the Liberal and National parties, rural MPs also argued there's a more serious issue facing Australians than the election campaign that hasn't even started yet.

Senators Fiona Nash and Bill Heffernan are warning of a looming devastation to country communities if this year's winter crop fails again for many farmers, while Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, says he can't overstate the seriousness of the drought at the moment.

"The outlook is extraordinarily worrying and unless there are some miracle spring rains the situation will devastate many individual farmers and rural communities," Mr McGauran said.

"We are on the brink of an unprecedented crisis of the like no-one in their worst imaginings would have predicted." He said the current income and interest rate support would continue under the current government.

"The Government would have to look at the adequacy of current exceptional circumstances arrangements.

"The banks are still remaining solid in their support but there must be a financial breaking point for them."

Senator Nash said she is far more worried about the impact of the drought on rural voters than the election.

"If we see another year of no income for farmers, there are many who will come to the end of the line," Senator Nash said.

"People keep saying this drought can't go on for another year, but it does.

"Already we're seeing stock out on crops and no water for irrigators.

"And there will come a time when the banks have to say 'that's enough'," she said.

Senator Nash said she has been saying to some of her city-based colleagues this week that there is a serious chance of no rain.

"Rural members understand what it's like, but I think city members might have seen some of the rain that fell at the start of winter, and think things are ok, but they need to know it still hasn't rained a single dollar in the bank."

SOURCE: Rural Press National News Service, Parliament House Bureau, Canberra.

The Australian

Turnbull changes mind on water auctions

Malcolm Turnbull has reversed his support for the sale of eight billion litres of water a year from Queensland's Warrego River in the upper reaches of the parched Murray-Darling river system.

In the face of rising opposition from NSW farmers, the Environment and Water Resources Minister yesterday consulted John Howard before writing to his Queensland counterpart, Craig Wallace, ordering that the auctions scheduled for next week be scrapped. Mr Wallace said last night the state Government would consider its response to Mr Turnbull's letter. The Queensland Government had planned to conduct two auctions next week in the western Queensland towns of Charleville and Cunnamulla.

Queensland has signed up to the federal Government's takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin. With Canberra planning to spend \$6 billion buying back over-allocated water licences in the basin, the controversial Queensland auctions were likely to be the last water-allocation auctions in the river system.

Mr Turnbull's reversal comes as he is facing a grassroots revolt in his eastern Sydney electorate of Wentworth over the controversial Gunns pulp mill project in Tasmania. It also comes a day after cricketing great Glenn McGrath, talking to The Australian, joined NSW farmers' opposition to the proposed sale.

"Water is the lifeblood of every farmer and the sale of these licences in Queensland will have a detrimental effect on every property downstream," he said.

Mr McGrath owns a grazing property on the Cuttaburra Creek, a tributary of the Warrego River. He and other NSW landholders say they will be deprived of much-needed water flows from Queensland if the sale proceeds.

New Queensland Premier Anna Bligh is expected to decide today, after consulting Mr Wallace, whether the sale will go ahead.

In March, the Prime Minister approved the sale in a letter to then premier Peter Beattie. He said the sale was consistent with the Warrego's water-sharing plan and, as a result, the commonwealth had no objection.

62

However, in his letter to Mr Wallace last night, Mr Turnbull justified the change of policy by referring to a report on the Warrego River released last week by the CSIRO.

Mr Turnbull said the report indicated that the future availability of water in the river was highly uncertain, with projected changes in inflows in 2030 ranging from a 44per cent increase to a 28per cent decrease.

"These findings indicate that it is vitally important to have a flexible management regime in place to ensure we can adapt to possible future changes in water supply brought about any climatic conditions," Mr Turnbull said.

Weir's key role in water crisis

A weir near Wellington is a key part of the Government's short-term solution to Adelaide's water crisis if the drought continues for the next two to five years, State Parliament has heard.

Opposition Leader Martin Hamilton-Smith yesterday asked Premier Mike Rann what plans the Government had to "protect and enhance Adelaide's water supply before its long-term plans are completed".

The Government on Tuesday said it would build a desalination plant, as revealed by The Advertiser, and would expand the Mt Bold Reservoir capacity.

Mr Hamilton-Smith said the Government had indicated it would be five years before a desalination plant would be completed and 10 years before an expanded Mt Bold Reservoir would be in place.

Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald, responding in Parliament yesterday, said: "We are carefully considering what options are available for the three states that are dependent upon the Murray-Darling Basin and we're continuing the work on the Wellington weir in case that scenario eventuates.

"Should dry inflows continue into next year and beyond, an emergency weir at Wellington could well be necessary to keep South Australia's pumps working."

The Government has said it would delay its decision on the weir until next June.

15th

News.com.au

Be climate clever, families told

Families will be encouraged to become "carbon neutral" by planting trees and other green initiatives in a \$25 million climate change advertising blitz.

The Federal Government hopes the national television campaign, starting tomorrow night, will boost its environment credentials.

It aims to generate a "feel good" factor by encouraging households to do simple things like turning off their computers, to reduce carbon emissions.

The Government has dropped an expensive plan to mail a booklet to every household, explaining how to be climate clever. Instead, households will be encouraged to use a special internet site.

A spokesman for Environment Minister Malcolm Turnbull denied the decision to ditch the booklet was cost-related.

The launch of the campaign comes as the Government battles to rein in Labor's commanding lead in the polls.

Voters have been particularly tough on John Howard, believing that he is out of touch on climate change issues. Last night, Labor's environmental spokesman Peter Garrett hit out at the campaign, which will include both television and print advertising.

"Australians are entitled to feel very cynical about this last-minute propaganda," Mr Garrett said.

"Why should our money be used to prop up this Government?"

An earlier version of the Be Climate Clever ad, leaked by internet campaign group GetUp!, included a range of practical measures to cut energy costs.

They included walking the kids to school, using the sun rather than hair dryers and changing to more energy-efficient light bulbs.

It also spruiked the Government's \$2.8 billion investment to tackle the problem of climate change -- even though some senior Coalition MPs are sceptics.

Australia's seven million households contribute around 20 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions, largely through electricity and transport use.

Families will be able to visit the special website to calculate their household greenhouse gas emissions, and receive information on how to reduce those emissions.

The Government will also encourage families to become a "greenhouse friendly carbon-neutral household" by buying abatement, such as through tree planting, to offset their remaining emissions.

The new push to present the Government's green credentials comes a week after John Howard released the so-called Sydney Declaration from the APEC summit.

The pact was attacked by Labor and green groups because it only committed APEC's 21 members to "aspirational goals".

Climate change is shaping as a key election battleground, with Labor attacking the Government for failing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

63

The ALP is also running a national scare campaign warning of 25 nuclear power stations being built if the Coalition is re-elected. The Coalition will attack Labor as being over zealous on environmental issues, warning its policies will mean thousands of jobs disappear in the resources sector.

adelaidenow.com

Nightmare on the land – National emergency 'just months away'

Farmers ravaged by drought have begun walking off their land amid warnings it is the start of a national disaster that will force up to 20 per cent to leave in the next year.

The growing crisis has prompted fears the River Murray food bowl will be devastated by the drought in coming months. The South Australian Farmers Federation says a state of national disaster may have to be declared next year.

Federation general manager Carol Vincent said farming organisations and the Department of Primary Industries and Resources of SA believe that 10 to 20 per cent of farmers could be forced to leave the land within a year.

"Some have suggested it could be up to 50 per cent within 10 years. But it's a matter of getting stuck into the problem to prevent that," she said. Unless good rains fall within four to six weeks, permanent plantings of fruit trees and grapevines are expected to die as water runs out.

Farmers have received just 16 per cent of their irrigation allocations this year. Melanie and Nigel Treloar, of Meningie, are among the farmers who have been pushed to the brink and plan to leave their farm.

Mrs Treloar said yesterday they would have to cull all 350 cows on their farm, probably within the next two months. "It's tragic seeing your livelihood disappear, but to see the environment dying is equally disappointing," she said.

"It's a pretty dismal picture. The lake is dying and it's having a domino effect that will go right up the river.

"Everything is dying around us, including the birdlife and the fish."

Mrs Treloar said they would keep milking until the water ran out.

They expect to be unable to access the water in Lake Albert in the next few months as the waterline recedes to about 3km from their pump shed.

"We're not exactly sure what we will do, we're taking every day as it comes."

The Treloars are expecting a baby in four weeks and have children aged two and three, while Mr Treloar has children aged 18, 15 and 12.

Central Irrigation Trust chief executive officer Jeff Parish said it was getting "very scary" throughout the Murray Darling Basin.

"Last year, with a 60 per cent cut in water allocations, we had a 30 per cent cut in production in the Riverland," he said.

"If we get a 40 per cent water allocation this year, it could cut production by 60-70 per cent or even worse."

Mr Parish said the crisis was flowing on to country businesses and Adelaide, where it had already cancelled nearly \$1 million worth of work this year.

He also feared that supermarkets would fill their shelves with lower quality imported produce.

Jim Cronin, a hero of the 1980s Eyre Peninsula farming crisis, said a number of people around Minnipa had walked off their farms and gone to work in the mines.

"Another is working for the Highways Department, that's the way they will survive," he said.

"The banks don't want to initiate anything, they will say nothing and wait until harvest and then evaluate it and work out what to do."

Ms Vincent said it would take a miracle to see any real amounts of water come down the River Murray this year.

"We're facing a predicament in Australia that we haven't seen before," Ms Vincent said.

"We have the Eyre Peninsula and Riverland in a crisis situation and other parts of the state will fall into the same plight."

"We need to be putting strategies into place now to maintain our regional communities."

Ms Vincent said that whoever won the federal election would have a major job on their hands because federal programs such as Exceptional Circumstances (aid) wouldn't be able to cope.

Federation president Wayne Cornish said the situation had become so desperate it was frightening.

"I was at a National Farmers Federation meeting in Canberra this week and the whole of Australia is in desperate trouble," he said.

"There was strong resolve at that meeting to improve Exceptional Circumstances support and to make it more accessible."

Mr Cornish said the maximum support for farmers forced to leave the land was \$70,000-\$80,000.

Murraylands dairy farmers Bob and Gloria Afford and Frank Mason said they would be forced to sell stock because they can make more money leasing out their water allocations.

The Affords are based at Woods Point, near Murray Bridge, while the Masons are about 10km away at Jervois.

64

The Affords are selling most of their 150 milking cows, which will be phased out until June next year before they reassess their situation.

Mr Mason said his milking herd would be reduced from 220 to 120 in the next fortnight. "We're not in danger of losing our farm, but we just have to work out the numbers and see what's best financially for us," he said.

The convenor of the Premier's Food Council Michael O'Brien said yesterday the drought was of real concern to the State Government and it was being monitored by Primary Industries and Resources SA.

Adelaide Advertiser

Cathedral project - Overhaul of energy and water use

North Adelaide's most recognised landmarks will be part of the city's largest "green" precinct incorporating environmentally sustainable techniques.

The Green Cathedral project, spearheaded by St Peter's Cathedral, will overhaul energy and water use in buildings on North Adelaide's southern fringe to create a more sustainable environment. The centrepiece of the proposal is the capture of stormwater from North Adelaide streets and its diversion into the aquifer below Adelaide Oval.

The water, which will be naturally cleansed in wetlands proposed next to the sporting ground, will then be available for use on the oval and parklands.

Cathedral dean Dr Steven Ogden said the 10-year project was instigated to help conserve and protect the environment as it struggles with climate change.

"For us, the Earth is sacred," he said. "We thought from a Cathedral perspective, what are we doing about the Earth?"

"There's a moral imperative here and there's a lot of goodwill in the city and surely we can get people to work on this project together."

Every major service in the area has expressed interest to be part of the project, including Women's and Children's Hospital, University of Adelaide, Next Generation and Memorial Drive Tennis Club.

The cathedral is the first to be improved through an energy audit now underway.

Dr Ogden said there were plans to capture rainwater from the cathedral roof for irrigation use.

"We've got one of the biggest rooftops in Adelaide and all the water is running off down into the River Torrens," he said.

"Stormwater runs past the oval and into the Torrens but if we could divert it into wetlands, perhaps near Oval 2, we would be able to use it more wisely."

Project partner Energy Architecture principal John Maitland said future extensions could involve the capture of stormwater in wetlands developed at North Adelaide Golf Course.

