



25 November 2009

Lachlan water users hear first-hand about critical water planning

Lachlan Valley water users were provided with more information about new water restrictions and critical water planning at six information sessions hosted by the NSW Office of Water, State Water and Lachlan Valley Water.

Over 350 people attended the meetings held at Cowra, Forbes and Condobolin on Monday and at Lake Cargelligo, Hillston and Booligal yesterday.

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss said that water security is the most important and challenging issue facing Lachlan Valley communities at the moment and he was pleased so many people turned-out to hear first hand about the drought contingency measures.

“The NSW Office of Water has implemented unprecedented flow management arrangements and restricted access to surface water to conserve water to meet critical needs in the Lachlan Valley,” he said.

“We have reduced water releases from Wyangala Dam to 300 megalitres per day and I expect the Lachlan River to stop flowing at Condobolin any day now.

“Wyangala Dam is currently at 4.8 per cent and our aim is to preserve as much water as possible in the dam to meet critical human needs over summer.

“We’ve also restricted the use of water from the region’s surface and groundwater resources and are supporting local councils and water supply authorities to drill emergency town water supply bores.

“Without these measures, we would run out of water in February.”

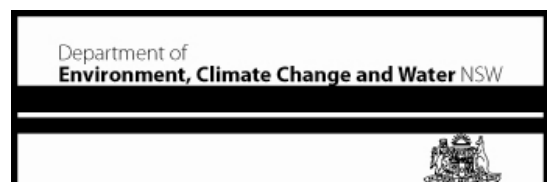
Mr Harriss said that most people who attended the meetings in the upper Lachlan wanted more detailed information about the new water restrictions, while people along the lower section of the river below Condobolin were most concerned about reduced water releases from Wyangala Dam and the current high security water allocation of 10 per cent.

“I understand the people of the lower Lachlan are concerned that irrigators upstream can still access water, but the fact is a high security water allocation of just 10 per cent equates to about 2,600 megalitres or two per cent of total water licensed for extraction in the region,” he said.

“Reducing or removing that allocation would make little if any difference to the severe water shortage in the Lachlan Valley, but it would devastate local industries that need water in each year to stay in business. This includes permanent plantings that would otherwise die and take years to re-establish. Many of the industries that need this water are significant employers in the region.

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“Rural landholders who need to cart water will receive 50 per cent funding from the NSW Government and we’re also helping foot the bill for any councils that need to cart water to villages.”

The next Lachlan Valley critical water planning communiqué detailing water availability and management in the region will be released on 1 December. The communiqués and detailed information on the water restrictions are available online from the NSW Office of Water’s website.

Ends