



FIXED WATER CHARGES WAIVED FOR DROUGHT-STRICKEN IRRIGATORS

Monday, 14 December 2009

Premier Kristina Keneally today announced the NSW Government will pay the bill for fixed water charges for 600 general security licence holders in the drought-stricken Lachlan Valley.

The measure is expected to save irrigators in the valley about \$2.3 million.

“From today, the Government will also waive the fees for general security regulated licence holders that receive a zero water allocation for three consecutive years,” Ms Keneally said.

This financial support will also be extended to licence holders in other parts of the State who did not receive a water allocation for three consecutive years.

“This represents a substantial financial commitment by the NSW Government and is in addition to over \$500 million in financial assistance that has been provided to drought-affected farmers since 2002.

“The Lachlan Valley is in the geographical heart of NSW and is at the centre of the drought crisis currently gripping nearly three quarters of the state.

“One of my first priorities since I became Premier was to visit drought-affected towns to hear-first hand people’s stories of resilience in the face of severe hardship.

“I want the people of regional NSW to know that their plight is at the forefront of our minds and that the NSW Government will continue to work hard to sustain their communities throughout the drought and help them adjust to reduced water availability.”

Minister for Water Phil Costa said this is the ninth consecutive year of drought in the Lachlan Valley and the region’s water supplies are dangerously low.

“Wyangala Dam can hold almost 2.5 times the volume of water in Sydney harbour, but is down to just 4.5 per cent of capacity - the lowest on record for this time of year,” said Mr Costa.

“If the NSW Government hadn’t acted to reduce water releases downstream the dam would have been dry in February.”

A range of subsidies and loans are also available to rural landholders, who can call the NSW Government’s Drought Hotline on **1800 814 647** for more information.

More information on water management and fees in NSW is available on the NSW Office of Water’s website: www.water.nsw.gov.au