

February 2007: Edition 11

“Snippets Plus” compiled using information from the Australian Water Association, Murray Darling Association, FarmOnline & various other sources including various printed media & presentations attended.

Compiled by Peter R. Smith OAM

South Australian Murray Darling Association Vice President & Secretary Region 6

One of AI Gore & Australian Conservation Foundation Climate Change Presenters Team

Ph 08 8569 8086 Mobile 0418 822 342

Emails psmiters@lm.net.au or myriver@lm.net.au Web Site www.psmithersmyriver.com

Australian Water Association – “Promoting the Sustainable Management of Water”

Murray Darling Association – “For Conservation and Sustainable Development”

February 2007

1st

FarmOnLine

Central Old irrigators cheered by Fairbairn Dam flows

National online water marketer, Waterfind, has come out in support of SA Premier Mike Rann's proposal for an 'independent commission free of politics' to manage the Murray Darling Basin.

Mr Rann has launched a national campaign to fight Federal Government plans to take control of the River Murray, writing to all the Premiers to win their support.

He wants an apolitical body, involving independent scientific experts not under the control of the Federal Minister for Conservation and Water.

"An apolitical body would keep the focus on the long term goals, and keep them at where we need to be," Waterfind's chief executive officer, Tom Rooney, said today.

While Prime Minister John Howard's 10-point plan for National Water Security included the Federal Government wresting control of water from the states, Mr Rann's proposal goes one step further, he claims.

"We don't want to swap state politics for federal politics," Mr Rooney said. "An apolitical body would ensure this would not occur." Mr Rann presented a letter to the Prime Minister and other state premiers yesterday, requesting a new, more powerful authority of experts.

"Political disputes are already emerging within the Federal Coalition about how inefficient irrigators and over-allocated water licences can be removed from the system.

"If the Federal Coalition cannot agree within itself, how can it expect the states to hand over responsibility to another group of politicians?" Mr Rann asked.

"I would be happy to support the Commonwealth having the right to choose the chair of an independent authority.

"And for the Commonwealth and the states to collectively agree on other independent experts making up the new commission."

Rann to fight Federal control of Murray-Darling

National online water marketer, Waterfind, has come out in support of SA Premier Mike Rann's proposal for an 'independent commission free of politics' to manage the Murray Darling Basin.

Mr Rann has launched a national campaign to fight Federal Government plans to take control of the River Murray, writing to all the Premiers to win their support.

He wants an apolitical body, involving independent scientific experts not under the control of the Federal Minister for Conservation and Water.

"An apolitical body would keep the focus on the long term goals, and keep them at where we need to be," Waterfind's chief executive officer, Tom Rooney, said today.

While Prime Minister John Howard's 10-point plan for National Water Security included the Federal Government wresting control of water from the states, Mr Rann's proposal goes one step further, he claims.

"We don't want to swap state politics for federal politics," Mr Rooney said. "An apolitical body would ensure this would not occur."

Mr Rann presented a letter to the Prime Minister and other state premiers yesterday, requesting a new, more powerful authority of experts.

"Political disputes are already emerging within the Federal Coalition about how inefficient irrigators and over-allocated water licences can be removed from the system.

"If the Federal Coalition cannot agree within itself, how can it expect the states to hand over responsibility to another group of politicians?" Mr Rann asked.

"I would be happy to support the Commonwealth having the right to choose the chair of an independent authority.

"And for the Commonwealth and the states to collectively agree on other independent experts making up the new commission."

SA drought package announced next Monday

A drought package to complement the Federal Government's Exceptional Circumstance funding will be presented to SA State Cabinet next Monday.

SA Agriculture Minister, Rory McEwen, and South Australian Farmers Federation representatives met early this week to discuss a number of drought issues, including SAFF's proposed freight subsidies.

SAFF president, Wayne Cornish, said the meeting was useful and wished Mr McEwen all the best in taking the package to Cabinet. Mr McEwen said he took all farming groups into account, to ensure everyone was supported.

Murray Valley Community Action Group

MVCAG RESPONSE TO PM's \$10b WATER PLAN

The Prime Minister's announcement last week of a national plan for water security is cautiously welcomed by the Murray Valley Community Action Group (MVCAG).

Chairman Lester Wheatley said while it looks to be a plan of vision for the future and for the support of the rivers of the Murray Darling Basin, he still holds the opinion that buying water even from willing sellers has the capacity to decimate rural communities.

"The PM's 10-point plan has much to commend it in this valley, especially the injection of funds for infrastructure in the delivery system as well as on-farm improvements.

The 50/50 sharing of water savings for the farmer and the environment will inevitably build a more healthy and balanced environment for us all," Mr Wheatley said.

"However, the PM needs to know that we view water acquisition as a very serious issue and one which should only be discussed at the same time as understanding the socio-economic consequences for affected communities.

To date, no specific socio-economic data has been made available, and we need to know the potential impact of large scale water entitlement acquisition, as proposed in the plan, and confirmed by Minister Turnbull.

We also need to know how the burden of acquisition will be shared within the whole Murray Darling Basin.

"The MVCAG look forward to learning more about the structural improvements and changes suggested for the Bramah Choke because this has the capacity to significantly reduce upstreamwater opportunities from the Murray River, and increase opportunities downstream by reducing current peak flow restriction.

"In my opinion the balanced implementation of this plan has the capacity to benefit future generations and is long overdue, so lets hope the States come on board in a spirit of cooperation and ensure the proposal becomes a reality", Mr. Wheatly concluded.

River News

Commonwealth wants control of water

Last week's announcement from Prime Minister Howard of a \$10 billion National Water management plan has drawn a mixed reaction from the States.

\$6 millin Blanchtown fishway under construction

SA Water is building a fishway at Lock 1 at Blanchtown under the auspices of the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

Better water for seven towns

Water quality will be greatly improved in seven towns in the Mid Murray Council area after an announcement by the State Government. In this round Wall Flat, Tungkillo, Pakmer, Cowirrs-Neeta, Blanchtown, Swan Reach and Cadellwill all receive a better quality water.

SAFF calls on McEwen to tour drought hotspots

The Chairman of the SA Farmer's Federation Livestock Committee has invited Agriculture, Food & Fisheries Minister Rory McEwen to join him on a tour of the drought-affected areas of the State to demonstrate the need for the Government to provide support to farmers to ensure they can get adequate fodder and water to their stock.

\$14m Coorong lifeline

Prime Minister John Howard will today use a visit to the Murray Mouth to announce a\$14 million plan to pump a lifeline of fresh water into the drought stricken Coorong.

More than \$14 million in Federal and State funds will go to the project, which also will pump fresh water to the South East's Bool Lagoon.

Rann 'is jealous' idea was not his

New Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull has launched a stinging attach on Premier Mike Rann over his refusal to endorse the Federal Government's take over of the Murray darling Basin.

There's no quick fix

Immediate cuts to greenhouse gas emissions will not avert the damaging affectsof climate change, says the author of Australi's latest scientific report on thwe prblem

Most happy with desalinated water

Adelaide residents have given the thumbs up to desalinated sea water to boost the city's water supply.

Politics slows flow

The Prime Minister's National Water Plan has merit, says observers-but extra protection is needed

The waters may be muddied, but the message appears crystal clear. Cleanse the system of politics, and Australia's life giving waters will run free. **From me: That's true.**

Stop the attacks and forge agreement

Malcolm Turnbull's colorful attack on South Australian Premier Mike Rann yesterday betrays the seriousness and desperation of the problems facing the Murray-Darling Basin.

But while the language was hardly conciliatory and seemed more likely to entrench positions than to forge agreement, the substance of what he says could well be right.

He claims, consistent with arguments already put forward by his boss Prime Minister John Howard, that a Federal takeover of the endlessly mismanaged Murray-Darling river system is manifestly in the interests of South Australia.

From MDA Region 6 and myself, we agree but an INDEPENDENT body is what we see as required, but lets at least sit at the table together.

Adelaidenow

Accept water plan, PM urges

PRIME Minister John Howard has finished a tour of the parched Coorong, where he appealed to State Premiers to accept his \$10 billion water package. Mr Howard urged South Australian Premier Mike Rann in particular to back the scheme, saying SA had the most to benefit.

He ruled out Mr Rann's proposal for an independent commission to manage the Murray, saying such a group would not be accountable to voters.

Commenting on plans for a weir near Wellington, Mr Howard said this was an example of issues caused by the lack of a long-term plan to restore the river to health.

As expected, Mr Howard also announced a \$14 million plan to pump a lifeline of fresh water into the drought-stricken wetland.

The move follows the rejection of Mr Howard's \$10 billion water rescue plan by Mr Rann, while Victorian and NSW leaders have said they'll consider the rescue package.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie is also considering it, but says he is concerned for the 17 million Australians who don't live by the Murray-Darling Basin.

During his Coorong trip, Mr Howard made what he called "a genuine appeal" for the acceptance of the plan, saying he was willing to talk to the premiers about it.

"We are determined to go ahead with this plan because we see it as the only salvation for the Murray-Darling Basin," Mr Howard said. Mr Howard said.

"I have been quite encouraged by the response so far ... I am obviously willing to sit down and talk with them more.

"This is a chance for Australia to fix this problem and it's of enormous benefit to those who depend on the Murray for their very existence and a great bulk of those of course are in South Australia."

Mr Rann has refused the Howard government's proposed takeover of the Basin, suggesting a new independent entity be formed to control the Basin.

But Mr Howard has in turn rejected the South Australian proposal.

"It's interesting that Mr Rann has acknowledged by his response that the current arrangements don't work and that is highly significant," Mr Howard said.

"Nobody is saying the current arrangements work, everybody is saying, even Mr Rann, that you need a single authority to administer it.

"I'm elected by the Australian people to take responsibility to tackle the Nation's problems - I don't tackle the Nation's problems by handing over responsibility to an unelected body and I'll never agree to do that.

"This plan will only work if we have a referral of power and I'd be very happy to sit down and talk with Mr Rann but in the end he has acknowledged that the current arrangements are not working.

"Mr Howard said the current arrangements were failing because the States were in competition with each other.

"So here, more appropriately than anywhere else in Australia, I'm making a genuine appeal to the premiers of the various states to support a commonwealth plan," Mr Howard said.

"I have found in the past that when I have talked to Mr Rann about this issue that he has had intense frustration with the deal that South Australia has been getting.

"And he has said to me on numerous occasions in private that the current arrangements don't work.

"I'm not in the business of taking on people, I don't see it as a contest, I see it as a long range plan to fix a great national problem.

"I'm an optimist ... what I intend to do is work on the assumption that reasonable men will respond to a fair and reasonable proposition in the National interest.

" Mr Howard said he had yesterday written to State and Territory leaders seeking approval for the reforms designed to put the four-state Basin under Commonwealth control.

Mr Rann yesterday described the plan as a "pre-election rescue package for irrigators in upstream states".

Climate Change There's no quick fix

IMMEDIATE cuts to greenhouse gas emissions will not avert the damaging effects of climate change, says the author of Australia's latest scientific report on the problem.

Federal Government researcher Ben Preston, who prepared a CSIRO report on the issue, says future changes to the climate are already "built into the system" by the greenhouse gases emitted over past decades.

He predicts that temperatures will continue to rise regardless of action by governments and industry.

Dr Preston says despite their inability to tackle the short-term effects of climate change, all measures must go forward.

2nd

FarmOnLine

SA Premier escalates water control fight

National online water marketer, Waterfind, has come out in support of SA Premier Mike Rann's proposal for an 'independent commission, free of politics' to manage the Murray Darling Basin.

Mr Rann has launched a national campaign to fight Federal Government plans to take control of the River Murray, writing to all the Premiers to win their support.

He wants an apolitical body, involving independent scientific experts not under the control of the Federal Minister for Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull.

"An apolitical body would keep the focus on the long term goals, and keep them at where we need to be," Waterfind's chief executive officer, Tom Rooney, said today.

While Prime Minister John Howard's 10-point plan for National Water Security included the Federal Government wresting control of water from the states, Mr Rann's proposal goes one step further, he claims.

"We don't want to swap state politics for federal politics," Mr Rooney said.

"An apolitical body would ensure this would not occur."

Mr Rann presented a letter to the Prime Minister and other state premiers yesterday, requesting a new, more powerful authority of experts.

"Political disputes are already emerging within the Federal Coalition about how inefficient irrigators and over-allocated water licences can be removed from the system.

"If the Federal Coalition cannot agree within itself, how can it expect the states to hand over responsibility to another group of politicians?"

Mr Rann asked. He added, "I would be happy to support the Commonwealth having the right to choose the chair of an independent authority.

"And for the Commonwealth and the states to collectively agree on other independent experts making up the new commission."

Turnbull baffled by Rann's water rebuff

Federal Water Malcolm Turnbull has been stunned by South Australian Premier Mike Rann's rejection of the Commonwealth's \$10 billion plan to take over the Murray Darling Basin.

"I am really baffled by Mike Rann's position," Mr Turnbull said.

"South Australia is at the end of the river so any project which has the objective of making more water available for the environment and putting more water back into the river will benefit South Australia.

"It seems as though he's miffed that it isn't his idea.

"He reminds me somewhat of a drowning man who's thrown a lifejacket and then rejects it on the basis that it doesn't match the colour of his tie."

Mr Rann has rejected the \$10B proposal on the grounds that it would be better to create a politically independent commission, similar to the Reserve Bank, to manage the river system.

Mr Turnbull refused to speculate on what the Federal Government would do if the states refused to sign over their constitutional powers to manage rivers to the Commonwealth.

Murray Valley Standard

Water licence but back not likely for Murraylands

Murraylands irrigators have less to worry about than those in the Eastern States when it comes to a possible compulsory water licence buy back scheme.

Prime Minister visits the 'Mouth'

Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer will visit today (1st February) the Murray Mouth today announce a plan to refresh the Coorong (Why was Patrick Secker not included?).

Proposal for compulsory rain water tanks

The Murray Bridge Council will seek to change the Building Code of Australia, hoping to make rainwater tanks compulsory to all new building developments in the region.

The Council is proposing all new developments, including housing, industrial and commercial will have a minimum 5000 gallon rain water tank fitted and plumbed for human usage in showers, toilets and drinking water.

No weir campaign gathers strength

About 60 people gathered at the Meningie Waterfront Motel last week to get an update of the No Weir campaign.

Adelaide Advertiser

Insults end but PM Rann gulf widens – CIVIL WAR

PM John Howard is demanding the States accept his \$10 billion River Murray takeover as Labour marshalls support behind SA Premier Mike Rann's alternate plan.

Water diversion to save Coorong

PM John Howard's \$14 million plan to help rescue the Coorong will divert water from the South-East and turn it North to flow into the dying wetland near Salt Creek. Much of that water now is wasted as it flows out to sea near Beachport.

A political logjam on the river

It is regrettable that genuine and comprehensive efforts by the Federal Government to revitalise the Murray-Darling river system have degenerated into a political arm wrestle.. Yet it may be unavoidable.

Adelaidenow

No rift with Rann, says Turnbull

NEW Federal Water Minister Malcolm Turnbull has played down any rift between himself and Premier Mike Rann over water rights.

Mr Turnbull earlier this week accused Mr Rann, who is resisting federal control of the Murray Darling river system, of being "miffed that it isn't his idea".

"He reminds me somewhat of a drowning man who's thrown a life jacket and then rejects it on the basis that it doesn't match the colour of his tie," Mr Turnbull said.

Mr Rann responded by accusing the Federal Government of "extraordinary arrogance".

"You know that he (Mr Turnbull) won't be drinking treated water, he'll be drinking and washing his hair in Perrier water at Piper Point," Mr Rann said.

But this morning, at the official launch of a \$2.8 million wetland and stormwater re-use scheme at the Grange Golf Club, Mr Turnbull dismissed the personal attacks as nothing more than political "jibes".

"I actually had a very constructive meeting with Mike Rann today and Karlene Maywald, I talk with the South Australian Government all the time," Mr Turnbull said.

"Mike Rann and I never had any need to make up.

"Jibes between politicians you should regard as being often more of sport than substance.

"South Australia will be an immense beneficiary of Mr Howard's plan for the Murray.

"The Grange Wetland – launched on World Wetlands Day – is a joint initiative of the Grange Golf Club, the State Government and the Federal Government's Water Smart Australian program.

It will see about 300 megalitres of urban stormwater – the equivalent of about 150 Olympic size swimming pools – diverted each year from Trimmer Parade and West Lakes Boulevard stormwater catchments to the wetland and away from the marine environment.

Once treated by the wetland, the water will be stored in the underlying aquifer and used for irrigation in summer.

When fully operational, it is hoped the system will reduce the golf club's reliance on water from other sources and ensure it is self-sufficient in irrigating its two 18-hole courses.

3rd

Adelaide Advertiser

UN's global warming report released

CHILLING WARNING

The United Nations last night released a damning report on the state of the global climate, predicting changing rainfall patterns, higher temperatures, devastating droughts and risks to coastal areas from rising sea levels.

Released in Paris, the report of the Intergovernmental panel on Climate Change delivers “the most conclusive evidence yet” that human activity has “very likely” caused global warming and irreversible damage to the planet. By 2100: Arctic ice will shrink, and perhaps disappear in Summer: Heatwaves and downpours will become more frequent: Sea levels are likely to rise by up to 59cm: Temperatures could rise by up to 6.4C.

Drought savages farm exports: The big dry's impact

The December figures were the 57th consecutive monthly deficit: * December trade balance of goods and services blew out to a seasonally adjusted \$1,336 billion: * Cereal exports were down 9%: * About 1.3 million sheep sent to slaughter, leading to a 5% rise in wool and sheepskin exports: * An estimated 720,000 cattle sent to abattoirs: * Total exports, including resources, are now growing at the slowest annual pace in almost three years: * Australia is experiencing its worst drought in more than 100 years:

You can lead a minister to water...but 'Perrier' Turnbull won't back down

After trading personal insults this week over control of the River Murray Federal Water Resources Minister and Premier Mike Rann now aim for “harmony”.

Industry giant defends free supply

BHP Billiton has defended its use of free water from the Great Artesian Basin following comments by PM John Howard about a need for it to be properly priced.

The issue has also raised concerns among Outback pastoralists who believe they may become entangled in the issue.

WATER CONSERVATION:

Backyard tanks are vital as climate becomes more unpredictable: Rain is heaven sent so make the most of it

A rainwater tank is the latest must-have accessory for the backyard, as water restrictions and conservation issues hit homes.

Rivers lost in flood irrigation – where the rivers have gone

The old methods of flood irrigation changed completely with the use of a 'laser plane'. Flood irrigation is an incredibly inefficient irrigation (especially where irrigation should have never been allowed) technique, but who really cares, the water is free.

The laser plane has transformed dry, sunburnt river plains in NSW & Qld into patchworks of irrigated land in less than a generation – that's where all the rivers have gone – making inland graziers suddenly rich.

That is why no one should trust Federal Politicians offering to take over the Murray Darling system They might choose to favour their newly wealthy friends over those who have learned, over many years, to use water well.

News.com.au

UN report puts heat on Howard

GREEN groups have urged the Federal Government to act to halt climate change following the release of findings in a UN report.

Most global warming since the mid-20th century had "very likely" been caused by human activity, a UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report released in Paris earlier today (AEDT) said.

The IPCC report is bad news for Australia as temperatures and sea levels are predicted to rise, unleashing increasingly intense storms, heat waves and heavy rains in the 21st century, the report says.

Australia's coastal communities face disaster, with the report predicting sea levels will rise up to 59cm, Greens spokeswoman Christine Milne says.

Senator Milne said Australia faced severe weather and the potential for international conflict would increase with rising sea levels.

"The IPCC report is very bad news for Australia and for the whole world in terms of temperature rise," she said.

"It's a disaster for coastal communities because of projected sea level rise of anywhere between 0.18 and 0.59m." She said the IPCC report was very conservative.

"Our own scientists have come out ... saying the IPCC is likely to underestimate its sea level rise because it hasn't taken into account the latest science on the glacial melt, particularly in the Antarctic."

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), the Climate Institute and the CSIRO joined Senator Milne in saying the IPCC report had ended the debate on whether global warming was happening.

Unless the Australian Federal Government legislated to reduce greenhouse pollution and ratified the Kyoto Protocol, future generations would be placed at risk, ACF executive director Don Henry said.

Failing to act on the findings of the report would be akin to committing a crime against future Australians, Mr Henry said.

"If we don't cut greenhouse pollution now and get on board the global fight against climate change we will be knowingly committing a crime against our kids," he said.

"It's just like once you know asbestos causes cancer, you've got to do something about it; there's no excuses." The groups agreed Australia faces severe weather, including cyclones moving further south, and the likelihood of drought across southern Australia.

Climate Institute adviser Erwin Jackson said global warming was mostly being caused by burning coal, oil and gas and he urged the federal government to introduce strong climate change laws, ratify the Kyoto Protocol and legislate price signals to reward business for investment in clean energy technologies.

"The Government has to roll up its sleeves and commit today to implement a clean energy plan that will ensure all Australia's new electricity generation comes from clean energy sources," he said.

CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research scientist, Dr Penny Whetton, was the lead author of the regional climate projections chapter of the IPCC report and said it showed the global warming debate was over.

"It is very likely that most of the rise in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century has been caused by increased greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere," she said.

There was a greater than 90 per cent chance that temperatures were rising due to human activities, she said.

The Australian

It's almost certain: humans caused planet to heat up

SCIENTISTS are now almost certain temperature increases over the last half of the 20th century were caused by human activity, and have warned of ominous further increases up to 4C by 2100.

The world's most significant weather forecast, released last night in Paris, revealed growing confidence in climate modelling that suggests greenhouse gases are reaching dangerous levels and need to be reduced.

The first volume of the fourth assessment report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has reported similar warming projections to its previous report six years ago.

The new report is based on the results of 23 climate models, a three-fold increase from the seven models used in 2001 to deliver best estimates of temperature increases ranging from 1.8C to 4C.

The increased number of models has widened the likely temperature ranges from 1.1C to 6.4C, compared with from 1.4C to 5.8C six years ago.

Significantly, the report finds man-made release of greenhouse gases is more than 90 per cent likely to have caused most of the observable increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century, about 0.65C.

The range of projected rises in global sea levels is from 0.18m to 0.59m by 2100, driven largely by their expansion from rising water temperatures.

The IPCC also reports greater confidence in the projected patterns of warming and other regional-scale features, including contracting snow cover, shrinking sea ice on the poles and the high likelihood of more frequent hot extremes, heatwaves and heavy rainfall patterns.

The Antarctic ice sheets are predicted to remain too cold for widespread surface melting and are expected to gain in mass due to increased snowfall.

While the Greenland ice sheet is projected to contribute to sea-level rises after 2100, the report says this will need to be sustained for millenniums to result in its complete elimination and a resulting sea-level rise of about 7m.

The report predicts the emission of carbon dioxide this century will contribute to global warming and sea-level rises for the next millennium.

The report predicts increasing intensity in cyclones, including higher peak wind speeds and more heavy rain patterns, but with the possibility of a reduction in their frequency.

Other storms are likely to track towards the poles as the world's weather systems adapt to changes in heat in the atmosphere and deep oceans.

Rainfall will shift from the subtropical regions towards the poles.

Australian Academy of Science president Kurt Lambeck praised the quality of the report by Working Group I of the IPCC.

He urged governments and industries to take swift action to reduce the pace of change to give "societies and ecosystems" time to adapt to a warmer and more unstable world.

"Climate change is here to stay," said Professor Lambeck. "We must open our eyes to what may be the most significant issue facing not only Australia but the planet."

In Britain, Royal Society president Martin Rees agreed, saying the report was a "comprehensive picture" of the latest scientific understanding of the nature, processes and likely outcomes of climate change.

But he correctly predicted a "vocal minority" would raise objections to the findings.

In Melbourne, former head of the weather bureau's National Climate Centre William Kininmonth was among the sceptics.

"My feeling is that the report is more alarmist than the evidence suggests," he said.

He was particularly critical of the IPCC's interpretation of the data and of the separate computer modelling systems used to predict future climate changes.

He added that, along with Canadian climate-change sceptic Ross McKittrick, he had contributed to an "independent summary for policymakers", to be released in London next Monday.

The current head of the NCC, Michael Coughlan, disputed Mr Kininmonth's objections.

He said the latest report built on past work and reflected continuing refinement in the understanding of the complex processes of the climate system.

Dr Coughlan said the new report fitted neatly with continuing observations of climate and ocean systems.

"Globally, we're seeing the trends (noted in the report) being laid down now: warming nights and fewer colder days and more heatwaves and heavy precipitation events," he said.

"These global trends are consistent with what we've been seeing in Australia over the past 50 to 100 years."

The head of the UN's Environment Program said last night the IPCC report had rendered "almost redundant" a European Union goal of limiting global warming to 2C.

Achim Steiner said the new report "gives us a stark warning that the potential impact will be more dramatic, faster and more drastic in terms of consequences" than previously thought.

Herald Sun

Climate change disaster alarm

GLOBAL warming will be unstoppable for hundreds of years, causing temperature rises of up to 6C and sea level rises up to 58cm by 2100, a UN climate report says.

The report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, released in Paris last night, found the evidence for global warming was unequivocal.

The release of the report triggered a flood of dire warnings from local experts.

Australian of the Year Tim Flannery said a 6C temperature rise would be a calamity. Australian

Conservation Foundation executive director Don Henry said that failing to act on the report's findings would be akin to committing a crime against future Australians.

More droughts, tropical cyclones, flash flooding and heatwaves are some of the report's predictions for Australia.

The report concluded drought conditions were more likely than not caused by human activities and the chance of heatwaves remaining at current levels was less than 10 per cent.

In the most comprehensive scientific evaluation undertaken, involving more than 6000 scientists, the report found humans were 90 per cent likely to have caused global warming through the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

"There can be no question that the increases in greenhouse gases are dominated by human activities," report co-chair Dr Susan Solomon said.

"Further warming will depend on the choices human beings make on whether to release more or less greenhouse gases."

Key findings include:

GLOBAL surface temperatures have risen 0.74C in the past 100 years.

ELEVEN of the past 12 years rank among the dozen warmest on record.

SEA levels rose by 1.9mm a year from 1961 to 2003, accelerating to 3.1mm a year from 1993-2003.

DROUGHTS have become more intense and longer, and observed over wider areas, particularly the tropics and sub-tropics, since the 1970s.

Dr Flannery said that a 6C temperature rise would be a disaster for all life on earth.

"Three degrees will be a disaster for all life on earth," he said.

"We will lose somewhere between two out of every 10 and six out of every 10 species living on the planet at that level of warming.

"It will set in train a series of climate consequences that will run for a thousand years.

"Flows in the Murray-Darling Basin would be reduced by almost half with a warming of more than 3C, and the distribution of Great Barrier Reef species would be slashed by 95 per cent.

Mr Henry said unless the Government legislated to reduce greenhouse pollution and ratified the Kyoto Protocol, future generations would be placed at risk.

"If we don't cut greenhouse pollution now and get on board the global fight against climate change we will be knowingly committing a crime against our kids," Mr Henry said.

Climate Institute policy adviser Erwin Jackson said the Government needed to act immediately to arrest the worst affects of climate change.

"It's critical governments begin to put in place a plan not to begin to switch Australia to clean energy," he said.

"That must include tough climate change laws, ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and price signals to reward businesses making clean energy."

Mr Jackson said the report served as a warning for governments, industry and the community not to become complacent.

"We cannot assume that the worst-case scenario cannot happen," he said.

Courier Mail

Pay for every drop by July

WATER bills in southeast Queensland could more than double as early as July as the region struggles under a worsening drought.

Brisbane City Council bureaucrats have called for huge water price hikes to cover the cost of delivering the resource to homes and businesses across six councils in the southeast.

Under the proposal, Ipswich ratepayers could be the worst affected and face a whopping 130 per cent price rise.

Ratepayers in Brisbane, Pine Rivers, Logan, Caboolture and Redcliffe are also targets, and may have to swallow water bills an average of 69 per cent higher.

The figures appear in a confidential submission to be taken to Brisbane City Council's civic cabinet on Monday by Labor water chairman John Campbell.

The proposal is for price rises in line with a policy of "full cost recovery".

It means Brisbane must cover the cost of delivering water to regional councils through its pipes and water treatment plants.

Water costs could jump by 94 per cent in Redcliffe, in Brisbane by 68 per cent, by 88 per cent in Caboolture, 78 per cent in Pine Rivers and 46 per cent in Logan. In Brisbane, the average family's annual water bill – for 256 kilolitres of water – could skyrocket from \$363 to \$609.

Lord Mayor Campbell Newman said last night he was shocked by the report and vowed not to back the increase.

He has called for a moratorium on any water price increase until the Queensland Water Commission reveals its plans to increase the price of regional bulk water.

"I'm not prepared to kick people when they are down and doing their best to cut water use," said Cr Newman, *pictured*.

"We are all in this together. It is not a time for Brisbane to use the big stick and gouge water revenue from its citizens and neighbours."

Last year, the council lost \$30 million in revenue because consumers cut back their consumption under tough water restrictions.

In June last year, SEQWater raised the cost of water supplied to 13 councils by 5¢ a kilolitre.

The price hike was passed on to ratepayers by Brisbane City Council. The Water Commission is expected to reveal its proposal for a new water pricing structure as the state builds costly new infrastructure.

4th

Adelaide's Sunday Mail

RECYCLED WATER: Drinkers loving new taste

The Sunday Mail after testing 56 people: Clear favourite emerges in blind test's surprise result. Which is recycled?

A Rainwater **10** B Tap water **12** C Recycled **10** D Bottled Spring **6** E Desalinated **10** Undecided **8**

Which tasted better?

A Rainwater **7** B Tap water **1** C Recycled **17** D Bottled Spring **11** E Desalinated **14** Undecided **6**

"Mr Rann's position is intellectually incoherent"

Murray-Darling stand is a political stunt, says Alexander Downer.

Mike Rann is the first premier in the history of South Australia to spurn an offer by the National Government to take control of the Murray-Darling system and pump \$10 billion into repairing it.

News.com.au

PM calls states to water meeting

Prime Minister John Howard has called a meeting of the State Premiers to discuss the Federal Government's \$10 billion water package.

The Prime Minister has convened the meeting for Thursday in Canberra following requests from Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and his Queensland counterpart Peter Beattie.

Meanwhile, Federal Labor Leader Kevin Rudd has unveiled his own plans to convene a climate change conference involving the nation's best business and science brains early this year.

Mr Howard said he was optimistic that Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and the ACT would accept the Federal Government's proposal to hand over their control of the Murray-Darling Basin under the \$10 billion package.

"I do hope we can sit down at this meeting, deal with the issue and reach agreement," Mr Howard said in Sydney.

"We do need a referral of powers because it's impractical to bump along with the existing governance arrangement.

"I do hope we can get the issue dealt with expeditiously.

"I am optimistic in believing that the states will agree to the Commonwealth's proposal."

Mr. Howard has invited the premiers of the Murray-Darling states of Queensland, NSW, Victoria and SA and the chief minister of the ACT, but has also extended an invitation to the other states.

He said if Thursday was inconvenient, he was happy to hold the meeting on Friday or Monday.

Mr Rudd's move follows the release on Friday of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, which stated that man-made global warming was 90 per cent certain and predicted serious consequences for the planet from rising temperatures.

Mr Rudd said today it was now clear that climate change had emerged as a critical challenge to the future of the nation, the region and the world.

"Climate change is an environmental challenge. It is an economic challenge. And it directly affects Australia's long-term sustainable prosperity," he said.

"It is in the national interest that we work together to develop the best national response to the climate change challenge.

"In recent times, others have called for a national summit on climate change, although the Government has rejected these calls.

"For this reason, I have decided to convene a National Climate Change Summit, bringing together some of the nation's best business and science brains."

Mr Rudd said the summit would be held around late March-early April.

He said prominent businessman and chairman of Labor's council of business advisers, Sir Rod Eddington, would assist in coordinating business participation.

Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) chairman and science professor Ian Lowe would also help in coordinating a cross-section of representation from the scientific community specialising in climate change.

"The summit will begin to shape a national consensus on the best way forward for Australia over the next decade," Mr Rudd said.

"Invitations will be extended to the Prime Minister and his ministers, premiers, chief ministers and their Opposition counterparts, representatives of local government and senior government officials."

Mr Rudd said he would welcome any of the range of views on how to tackle climate change but would not change his party's opposition to nuclear generated electricity.

"My approach to this is we have nothing to fear whatsoever from an evidence-based approach to people's submissions to a climate change summit," he said.

"People from that side of the argument are welcome to attend. "(But), on the question of nuclear reactors in this country, no. Absolutely not.

"Our position in relation to nuclear reactors is clear-cut and unchangeable."

Doom merchants

Scientists and policy-makers have a way to go in understanding what to do about climate change but that's not stopping hysteria, hype and social agendas. Environment writer **Matthew Warren** reports

THE end of the world is nigh. Last night the world's leading college of climate change scientists officially released the latest findings on the likelihood and global impact of man-made climate change.

Drafts of the report have been leaking like a sieve during the past six months.

The building drumbeat of its impending release has cued the return of the four horsemen of the apocalypse that now seemingly ride shotgun alongside every new report on climate change.

This time around the Great Barrier Reef will apparently become extinct.

Toddlers of today will become heat-prostrate as grandparents in the future. Buildings will be under water. No more beaches. No more snow.

It would be funny if it wasn't so serious.

The threat of a warming planet continues to be treated with hysteria by politicians and commentators alike, some taking on self-anointed evangelism, others, such as NSW Premier Morris Iemma, citing doomsday scenarios as an apparent chance to mask other bad news of the day.

Comments by eminent climate change scientist Graham Pearman reflected the concerns of a growing number of scientists about the escalating alarmism: "We should be cautious about stirring up anxieties about what

may not come about. In reality it's very difficult to be sure about what will occur for a region or a city," he says.

"I don't know whether Iemma really knew what he was saying there.

Maybe he didn't appreciate there was a range, with different outcomes."

The shock-and-awe approach to climate change politics may have been an important part of this progress. But it may also be past its use-by date.

The combination punch of prolonged drought in Australia, the buzz surrounding the release of the Stern Report in the UK and Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* have floored public and corporate resistance to the threat.

A global online poll released yesterday by AC Nielsen is the latest in a series that bears this out.

It found that 92 per cent of Australians are aware of global warming and 93 per cent of these think it is serious or very serious.

Even allowing for the inherent bias in environmental polling and the sample group, similar numbers are reportedly coming up in private government polling on the issue, particularly in the under-35 group.

The first volume of the fourth assessment report by the UN-linked Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, finalised this week in Paris, comprises the work of 750 of the world's leading climate change scientists.

It is an important, serious and considered body of work, providing carefully considered projections of likely temperate changes and impacts based on a suite of 21 climate models.

The analysis builds on the 2001 report and reflects progress in understanding the incredibly complex system of heat absorption, reflection and transfer that makes up the Earth's climate systems.

As has been widely predicted, the scale of the projected temperature change has not drastically altered during the past six years, but the scientists' level of confidence has.

In 2001, they said it was "likely" human activities were driving warming of the planet - meaning a probability of between 66 per cent and 90 per cent.

Last night the IPCC ramped this up to greater than 90 per cent certain, which it calls "very likely".

The IPCC also predicted a temperature rise of between 1.8C and 4.0C by 2100, a narrower range than the 1.4C to 5.8C given in 2001.

Because of the complexity and range of models used, there are outlying results higher and lower than this.

The most extreme estimates have invariably found their way into the vernacular.

To a lay person a five-year wait just to tweak the numbers and add the word "very" might seem a bit of an anti-climax.

Scientists involved in the process have been resolute to ensure their reporting is deliberately sober and cautious to lend weight to the need for an immediate and effective policy response to address it.

In Australia, they have already succeeded. Here the debate on climate change has shifted gears, from alarm to acceptance to action.

It has been a stunning and swift change during the past two years, particularly in the last few months.

Polling of business and the community has revealed broad acceptance that the threat of global warming is real and requires a prompt and effective policy response.

Of course, critics of the IPCC science remain and continue to make their case.

There are some who say it is too conservative and others who say it is wrong or overstated.

While this discussion can and should continue, it is now parallel to the central and more pressing debate in Australia - what are we going to do about it?

In November last year the president of the Business Council of Australia, Michael Chaney, gave an important speech accepting the need to insure against the risk of climate change through an effective policy response to it, even though he personally held doubts about the validity of the science.

For years prior to this speech the BCA, representing the views of the top end of corporate Australia, had been unable to find a united position on the issue.

Rio Tinto Australia managing director Charlie Lenegan agrees there has been a dramatic convergence of opinion in the business community in the past 18 months between those who wanted to sign the Kyoto Protocol and drive emissions trading and the other school that argued Australia should not respond until a global framework was in place with a greater focus on technology solutions.

"What you have seen emerging over the past 12 to 18 months is a convergence of those two positions and recognition that you need solutions in all of these areas to move forward," he says.

Lenegan was surprised by recent reports claiming Rio Tinto Australia - whose core assets include high carbon risk businesses such as coal mines and aluminium smelters - had made a major shift in its attitude to both the risk of climate change and the suitability of policy tools such as emissions trading.

"I don't think there has been a sea change," he says.

"We have had the view for quite some time that the challenge is real and that it needs urgent action. From all the work we've done there is no silver bullet. What is needed is a portfolio of initiatives.

"Emissions trading is one of those initiatives that can help deliver a solution. We haven't actually changed our view or position.

If you'd asked us a year ago we would have told you that market mechanisms are part of the group of initiatives required."

Emissions trading - effectively placing a ceiling on greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide and then buying and selling permits for the right to emit them - highlights the dual nature of the policy response, technically simpler at the national level and much more fraught at the global level.

"An Australian unilateral solution doesn't actually make material change to the global position," Leneghan says.

"We don't want to cop out and say no one needs to do anything until everyone does something.

It's going to take a long time to develop the global frameworks and in our view you are going to need to work towards solutions."

The Prime Minister's emissions trading taskforce will report back by the end of April. Made up of companies with much to lose from a poorly designed scheme, it is likely to be better focused than other groups to suggest how this might work in an Australian context.

The International Energy Agency in Paris predicts that by 2030 more than half of all new emissions will come from the developing world, implying a long-term solution must ensure these economies' emissions are cut as they grow.

The UN may be the forum to bed down any breakthrough deals, but these appear more likely to come from bilateral agreements.

The US Congress is already beginning to shift after the mid-term elections and the next US president is likely to become an important deal broker, particularly with China, to ensure longer-term constraints on developing countries are set in place to arrest the risk of emission levels simply moving around the globe, rather than falling.

Deloitte energy and infrastructure expert Ron Loborec has been speaking with senior executives across Australia's energy and transport sector and is more upbeat about the risk of managing global competitiveness in the Australian economy.

"I don't think the sunk capital in big industry is going to have time to withdraw itself from the Australian market, and even if they did, where are they going to go?

The sovereign risk outside Australia is huge," Loborec says.

"I think these organisations are starting to realise that they are stuck, the capital is sunk and they are going to remain a feature of the Australian economy for years to come.

"Given the pre-eminence the policy debate now has, the key IPCC report is not yesterday's confirmation of the science, but its third report on methods to reduce emissions to be released in May.

Certainly by federal polling day this year, Australians will have the opportunity to vote on whether they really think this issue is a deal-maker.

5th

FarmOnLine

Govt to spend \$72m buying back water for wetlands

Irrigators will be asked by the Federal Government to sell their water in a bid to revive ailing wetlands.

Environment and Water Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has used World Wetlands Day to release \$91 million for six projects aimed at restoring Australia's wetlands.

Of that, \$72m will be used for projects which rely on the Government buying water from willing sellers to provide environmental flows.

"When the water is not required for the environment it will be able to be traded back to irrigators on the temporary market," Mr Turnbull said.

The move is sure to spark reaction among irrigators and politicians alike, following this week's row over whether the Federal Government should compulsorily acquire water from irrigators in order to revive environmental flows in the Murray River.

While Mr Turnbull has said that option is "not inconceivable", it is a last resort behind saving water through improved infrastructure.

Water: Beattie wants urgent meeting with Canberra

With confusion clouding the future of the Federal Government's \$10 billion plan for the Murray Darling Basin, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie is calling for an urgent meeting between the states and the Commonwealth.

"When John Howard publicly announced his plan for management of water within the Murray-Darling system last week he promised he would provide more detail," Mr Beattie said.

"We are still waiting.

"We have received an overview letter from the Prime Minister but that still doesn't tell us what we really need to know.

"Where are details such as the specific powers they seek to have referred and how they practically expect to manage this vast resource?"

Mr Beattie has today written to the Prime Minister outlining these concerns.

The move comes after South Australian Premier Mike Rann yesterday indicated he would not support the Commonwealth's proposal.

Prime Minister John Howard has offered to take responsibility for the river, but the states must first sign over their constitutional powers to manage rivers.

Mr Beattie is concerned that centralising power in Canberra may cause as many problems as it solves.

"It would be a nightmare for farmers, irrigators and other businesses if they had to deal with different approvals in the States only to then have to jump through hoops for bureaucrats in Canberra," Mr Beattie said.

"We are keen to ensure that any new system is able to ensure the connection between the proposed management of water by the Commonwealth Government and other resources by the State is both practical and workable."

PM has called meeting for Thursday 8th February.

Water: Lower Lakes feel Murray's upstream pressure

As debate rages on the best way to secure South Australia's Murray water supplies, it has been revealed that two-thirds of the Coorong is dead, and the River's Lower Lakes are suffering.

And if the adage that the Coorong and Lakes act as a barometer for the River Murray is correct, the river is next in line.

Over-allocation is being partly blamed for the poor health of the system - not just the drought - by many of these communities.

River, Lakes and Coorong Action Committee spokesperson, Henry Jones, the purpose of the Murray Mouth is to act as the kidneys, removing the build-up of salt and nutrients.

The man-made dredges keep the mouth open, allowing the salts and nutrients wash out to sea - as it has for thousands of years.

Tidal movement has brought back fresher water and kept the remaining third of the Coorong alive.

This water, particularly from the River Murray and lakes Albert and Alexandrina, is relied on to irrigate and feed stock, and provide water to entire communities such as Narrung.

There are numerous properties which have no access to mains or groundwater, and it is these people who are most concerned.

Farmers like Clem Mason, Narrung, has cut back his operations because of the lack of water.

Mr Mason planted 600 hectares of barley and oats last season, most which failed.

Only 150 cows have been milked during January, 80 fewer than an average year.

The property receives an average of 457 millimetres of rain each year, but is yet to record 150mm, on top of a loss of 40pc water allocations.

"The river is clearly not flowing, due to the drought and over-allocation, but this could change," Mr Mason said.

"It is a problem when people who don't even live on farms own water, and make a living out of selling it.

"The government should buy this water and put it back in the river, instead of reallocating it."

Water plan consistent with dairy's goals

The dairy industry believes the Federal Government's \$10-billion water plan is consistent with its strong views on water utilisation in agriculture and dairy in particular.

Australian Dairy Farmers and industry services company, Dairy Australia, have both expressed cautious optimism at the Government's plan, despite the likelihood that irrigators will face allocation cutbacks.

ADF president, Allan Burgess, says the plan largely reflects the principles laid out by the industry in discussions it has been having with Government in recent months.

"The announcement contains many features and principles in common with the industry – most particularly the wisdom of co-investment with farmers in leading-edge water management infrastructure," Mr Burgess said.

"The principles the industry applies to water use also embrace continuous improvement in the effective and efficient use of water.

"It would appear the Government's approach is consistent with ours."

But Mr Burgess, like most other rural leaders, wants to see more detail, before giving it a full endorsement. Dairy Australia managing director, Mike Ginnivan, agreed but has welcomed the opportunity of significant additional funds and a national response.

"Dairy Australia and its predecessor organisations have conducted research into on farm infrastructure and water delivery systems - for example channel control, piping and river control infrastructure," Dr Ginnivan said.

The Australian dairy industry uses almost 40pc of the water utilised in food production across the nation and more than half of the nation's dairy farmers irrigate all or part of their farm.

Cotton Australia welcomes \$10B water deal

The Australian cotton industry has welcomed the Federal Government's package of measures to address rural water issues, including funds to improve irrigation and water infrastructure efficiencies.

Cotton Australia chief executive, Adam Kay, has hit back at the fresh round of political cotton bashing in the wake of Prime Minister John Howard's water proposal, by arguing Australia has the "most water efficient cotton growers in the world".

"The industry invests millions of dollars in water research and infrastructure and 70pc of irrigators have made changes to improve irrigation practices over the past five years," Mr Kay said.

"Cotton growers already spend more than any other agricultural industry on natural resource management; an average \$244,000 per farm per annum.

"Any new program to assist growers fund this work will be well received."

South Australian Premier Mike Rann is so far refusing to sign over control of the Murray to the Commonwealth on the grounds that the eastern states' politicians are captive to the cotton and rice lobbies. Mr Rann wants an end to the cotton industry, while others have used the Commonwealth's proposal as a signal to again attack cotton giant, Cubbie Station, for the size of its allocations.

In contrast, Mr Kay says any measure to upgrade state-owned water infrastructure in the Murray-Darling system that will help reduce inefficiencies in storing and delivering water is welcome.

"Particularly during times of severe drought, it is critical to conserve and use every drop of water wisely," he said.

"This year's cotton crop will be the smallest in 20 years, with the outlook getting worse every day it doesn't rain.

"The cotton industry looks forward to seeing the details of the 10-point plan and to working with a new Federal Water Agency to deliver outcomes at farm and catchment level."

Published in newscom.au

As the South Australian Murray Darling Association Vice President, Secretary of Region 6 of the MDA, the holder of the water re-use portfolio on the Lower Murray Working Group and a Climate Change Presenter trained by Al Gore and the Australian Conservation Foundation I have definite views regarding the refinement of sewage or Indirect Potable Re-use. Two years ago I visited Toowoomba to find out if there was any way we from Region 6 could assist them in their venture to have IPR accepted in Toowoomba. The loss of the vote in Toowoomba especially as the opponents did not have an alternative was a disaster for not only Toowoomba but Australia. IPR is accepted nearly completely throughout the World as a plausible safe method of supplying potable water. Water is not as some people think an infinite resource and without ensuring we use all methods available to use and re-use water we are fooling ourselves as with air we can not survive without water. We must all heed the words of Lyndon B. Johnson the 39th President of the USA, "A Nation that fails to plan intelligently for the development and protection of its precious waters will be condemned to wither because of shortsightedness. The hard lessons of history are clear, written on the deserted sands and ruins of once proud civilisations". Thankyou Peter R. Smith OAM

Adelaide Advertiser

PM calls summit to tackle river crisis

Prime Minister John Howard has moved to regain control of his planned \$10 billion takeover of the Murray-Darling Basin by calling an emergency meeting of all State and Territory leaders this week.

Rainwater tanks too small, say plumbers

Mandatory rainwater tanks in all new homes should be at least three times bigger than regulations require to be effective, according to the Plumbing Industry Association.

Residents' weir demand

Lower Murray residents are continuing to demand any alteration to a temporary weir at Wellington be made public by the State Government.

AWA

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC's) 4th Assessment Report was released last Friday. "Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis", assesses the current scientific knowledge of the natural and human drivers of climate change, observed changes in climate, the ability of science to attribute changes to different causes, and projections for future climate change.

The State Premiers have been called to Canberra this week by PM John Howard to discuss the \$10 billion Water Plan for the Murray-Darling River system and their role. (Website) Premiers Beattie (Queensland) and Bracks (Victoria) had asked for the meeting. (Statements Website)

SA Premier Mike Rann has locked horns with water Minister Turnbull over plans to hand over control of the Murray River to the Australian Government, but says a legal battle over the river would be a waste of time and money, with the dollars better spent on the river itself.

Stores of water for the Gold Coast and SE Queensland from the Wivenhoe Dam catchment stood at 22.5% at end of January, enforcing the urgency of boosting dwindling supplies.

On Australia Day weekend, Sydney had 88 weeks supply of water remaining in its Warragamba supply system despite more than 122,000 ML having been pumped from the Shoalhaven River to bolster dam levels.

By using life cycle assessment methodology, the CSIRO has found that the economic value of water consumed by the minerals industry (averaging \$80/m³) exceeds that of the industrial sector (averaging about \$40/m³) and the agricultural industry (averaging about \$5/m³), supporting the view that allocations to the mining industry have an economic basis.

ACTEW has given in principle commitment to enlarge the Lower Cotter Dam to increase its storage capacity from 4 GL to 78 GL and to the further treatment of water from the Lower Molonglo Quality Control Centre to drinking water standard; then piping to a stream in the Lower Cotter catchment and then into Cotter Dam to blend with natural water to supply Canberra.

The next Water Industry HR Network Meeting will be held in Sydney on 15-16 February; open to HR managers in the Australian water industry. Sydney Water is hosting the meeting, so no cost to attend, but attendees are responsible for their own travel and accommodation.

Sydney's proposed Desalination plant will be powered 100% by green energy, accredited by the National GreenPower Accreditation Program. The 125 ML/d plant would consume 225,000 MWh of GreenPower annually.

SKM with THIESS, subsidiary of Leighton Holdings, under an alliance agreement with Water Corporation, are members of a successful consortium awarded a \$352m contract to upgrade Perth's three main metropolitan wastewater treatment plants in WA.

A new WastewaterR treatment plant has been opened at Wiluna, WA, by the Water Resources Minister, with an upgraded treatment system comprising a pumping main, new pump station, connecting pipeline and an evaporation pond 1.5km out of town, replacing three treatment ponds located in central Wiluna.

Water Corporation, WA, in conjunction with well-known Perth gardening identity John Colwill, has developed its website over the past few months, incorporating a Water Wise Guide to Gardens, as an initiative to reduce household water consumption.

According to the UK's Drinking Water Inspectorate, while 99.96% of tap water meets national purity standards, benzene was found in the Perrier brand of Bottled Water and bromate in the Dasani brand between 1989-2004. The PET containers can contain traces of antimony.

Researchers from Municipal Institute of Medical Research in Barcelona, Spain have matched 1,219 people with bladder Cancer to 1,271 people without and tracked exposure to chlorinated water from 123 municipalities. People in homes where trihalomethane (THM) level exceeded 49 µg/litre had twice the risk of bladder cancer than those living in households where the concentration was less than 8 µg/litre.

A dual pipe system has been recommended for cities in Greece where treated wastewater is discharged to the ocean; it could be recycled on urban parks and playing fields. The National Institute of Rural Research has also confirmed that many crops, including sugar beets, maize and barley, can be irrigated safely with properly treated wastewater.

Cyprus has announced that, after three years of poor rainfall, dams have fallen to 21% capacity. Domestic water customers won't suffer from water cuts for the time being, but farmers will get no further irrigation water for seasonal crops and the island's golf courses will only receive 30% usual allocations.

In the wake of the Federal Government's \$10B rural water plan, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie is calling on Prime Minister John Howard to chip in for his controversial urban water recycling plan for urban areas.

Managing opposition from irrigators, key supporters of the coalition National Party poses a bigger challenge to the PM's water plan than gaining co-operation on water from the states according to the editorial in Australian Financial Review, Jan 30, p54.

SA's Liberal opposition wants to legalise sewer mining to facilitate more wastewater recycling and also plans to reduce reliance on the River Murray for water via a \$400 million desalination plant to produce 45GL annually.

John Quiggin from University of Queensland says efficient solutions to the Murray-Darling water crisis are difficult to see in the PM's plan.

Wentworth Group economist Mike Young said factories and households in cities and towns should be exposed to the same market fluctuations for water as farmers, some of whom have seen the price of the resource increase up to seven times during this drought. (Website)

Scientists and economists have been offered \$10,000 each by a lobby group funded by one of the world's largest oil companies to undermine the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 4th Assessment Report, released late last week. The Guardian, UK, Friday Feb 2, 2007. (Website)

Adeliadenow

PM flags carbon pricing plan

PRIME Minister John Howard appears to be softening his opposition to putting a price on carbon emissions, saying market mechanisms, including carbon pricing, will be integral to any long-term response to climate change.

Mr Howard's comments come as the West Australian Government considers a carbon tax of up to \$25 a tonne that could cost the state's mining industry \$200 million a year and increase household electricity bills. The Prime Minister's taskforce looking into an emissions trading system is set to release a discussion paper this week.

Mr Howard has previously expressed broad opposition to carbon pricing, but in his weekly radio address today said: "Market mechanisms, including carbon pricing will be integral to any long term response to climate change.

"(The paper will outline) a set of issues regarding the development and implementation of a workable global emissions trading scheme and the role Australia can play."

But Mr Howard said he was concerned about any impact on the economy associated with dramatic reactions to climate change.

"There is undeniable evidence that our climate is changing but the answer is not knee-jerk responses that harm the national interest," he said.

"The Government will continue to put forward practical and sensible measures to tackle climate change."

The carbon tax plan in WA is the most significant response by any state government to the threat of climate change.

It was among a raft of measures flagged in a report released today by a special taskforce set up to examine ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by West Australian electricity generators.

The report is understood to recommend an emissions trading scheme and the adoption of a 20 per cent renewable energy target by 2020.

A carbon tax would have a major impact on West Australia's alumina industry, with the state being the world's largest supplier, and could lead to higher household electricity prices.

Alumina production accounts for about half the electricity demand in the state's southwest, with a \$25 per tonne tax estimated to cost the industry \$200 million a year.

The report comes as the two major parties moved yesterday to seize control of the global warming agenda in response to the release on Friday of a major scientific report that attributes climate change almost certainly to human activity.

The report by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned of a global temperature increase of up to 4C by 2100 unless deep cuts are made in global greenhouse gas emissions caused primarily by the burning of fossil fuels.

Labor leader Kevin Rudd announced yesterday his own national summit on climate change, to be held late next month or early April. The summit would provide ideas to be considered at the ALP national policy conference to be held in Sydney from April 27-29.

Mr Rudd said Rod Eddington – chairman of Labor's Council of Business Advisers – would encourage industry leaders to attend the summit, while scientists would be rallied by Australian Conservation Foundation president Ian Lowe.

The Labor leader declared he was "open to ideas" on solving the threat of global warming – unless they involved a reversal of the party's opposition to nuclear power.

"My approach to this is we have nothing to fear whatsoever from an evidence-based approach to people's submissions to a climate change summit," Mr Rudd said. "(But) on the question of nuclear reactors in this country, no. Absolutely not. Our position in relation to nuclear reactors is clear-cut and unchangeable."

The Blair Government in Britain is hoping to speed up the US response to climate change by bypassing President George W. Bush and urging US states to join directly with Europe's own carbon trading scheme. While the EU emissions trading scheme has struggled to operate effectively since its launch in 2005, the British Government hopes that nine northeastern states and California can eventually join as the first step towards making it a global scheme.

The NSW, Victorian and South Australian governments have already introduced mandatory renewable energy targets of up to 20 per cent by 2020 and have developed a blueprint for a state-based emissions-trading scheme, which was effectively blocked by the Beattie and Carpenter governments when released last August.

Premier Alan Carpenter is now expected to commit his Government to announcing a new greenhouse gas reduction strategy, possibly as early as next month.

The greenhouse taskforce was set up in 2005 and was headed by Roy Green, a former deputy chair of the state's Environmental Protection Authority.

Since it reported to the Government last Christmas, several senior policy advisers have been working to develop a climate change strategy.

Western Australia is unique among the states in having more than half its electricity generating capacity capable of running on natural gas, which produces about half the greenhouse gases of coal, which is used extensively in the eastern states.

The state controls Australia's largest reserves of natural gas, with reservoirs containing more than 120 trillion cubic feet discovered off the northwest coast.

The state already has several wind farms, based south of Geraldton and around Albany and Esperance.

Strategy ... the WA carbon tax would be the most significant response by any state government to the threat of climate change / File / No credit

News.com.au

Trade water on eBay, says scientist

URBAN households should be allowed to buy and sell water on eBay under a radical trading scheme proposed yesterday.

Wentworth Group economist Mike Young said factories and households in cities and towns should be exposed to the same market fluctuations for water as farmers, some of whom have seen the price of the resource increase up to seven times during this drought.

Professor Young said well-designed trading in cities had the potential to drive big improvements in water efficiency – including dual-flush toilets and rainwater tanks – more attractive.

He said water utilities were already discussing trialling such a trading scheme for big industrial users in some of the driest regional centres across Australia.

"There's lots of opportunities to be innovative once there is a market price there," he said.

"We reckon other alternatives would start to become profitable. People will think a lot more about dual-flush toilets, about putting in rainwater tanks, about taking their own wastewater and using it on lawns and all those sorts of things rather than this standard household behaviour."

Professor Young was the original proponent of the Reserve Bank board management structure for the Murray-Darling Basin.

This is the key sticking point in the disagreement between John Howard and South Australian Premier Mike Rann over governance of the system under the proposed \$10 billion reform plan announced last month. Professor Young said households could be given a set allocation of water for washing, cleaning and garden use, and then those who cut consumption would be able to sell off their surplus to others, such as pool owners, who needed more.

He said the simplest way of doing this would be to "put them up for sale on eBay", and to protect a minimum level of water for each house so that low-income households could not be exploited by selling off all their water for fast cash.

Water Services Association deputy director Claude Piccinin said while no one should be excluded from trading in an open market for water, the cost of such a scheme at the household level would make it prohibitive.

"When it comes to households being given a 200-kilolitre entitlement to trade, the transaction costs are just not worth it," he said.

Howard agrees to talks on water takeover

JOHN Howard faces a showdown with state premiers this week over his plan to "revolutionise" management of the Murray-Darling Basin and wrest control from the states.

As Queensland Premier Peter Beattie called on the Prime Minister yesterday to extend his \$10 billion water plan to the cities, Mr Howard bowed to pressure to hold talks with Murray-Darling leaders over the package. The Prime Minister agreed to hold a summit with the Queensland, NSW, Victorian and South Australian premiers and the ACT Chief Minister in Canberra on Thursday – an idea first raised a fortnight ago by Labor leader Kevin Rudd.

Mr Howard said yesterday he hoped the state and territory leaders could sit down and reach agreement during this week's talks, conceding co-operation was required.

"The approach I outlined is revolutionary, and it will require a revolution in thinking to make it work," he said.

"It will only work if the leaders of five state and territory governments set aside any partisan and parochial concerns and focus on the long-term needs of the Murray-Darling Basin and the people whose future depends on its good health.

"The states are not entirely to blame for what has happened. The weather has also played its part, but there is no doubt that competing interests have led to mistakes in management and the over-allocation of water."

Mr Beattie welcomed the summit, but said he had one potential problem with the Commonwealth taking over control of water – that the "National Party tail would wag the dog".

"I am inclined to support an independent authority," he said, aligning himself with South Australian Premier Mike Rann, who has warned he will not sign on to the plan unless control over the river system is managed by a new independent authority.

"Water allocation was horrendous under the previous National Party Government in Queensland."

Mr Beattie said he had received legal advice that Mr Howard's plan to seize control of the Murray-Darling could not proceed without the states' approval.

Accusing the Howard Government of announcing its plans "like Moses handing down the 10 commandments", he said greater consultation was required over whether affected irrigators would be compensated.

"It's all very well to put \$10 billion into the Murray-Darling, which is important... but we've got to put water infrastructure in to look after where people live and that's why I think there should be one major water project supported by the Commonwealth in each state," Mr Beattie said.

Mr Rann said he was happy to talk at the earliest opportunity to the Prime Minister, who last week said he would not hand over control of the basin to an unelected body.

"As I have made clear, I am prepared to relinquish the state's control over the Murray-Darling Basin, but I'm not prepared to give away the state's constitutional rights without appropriate safeguards and guaranteed entitlements over water from the Murray for all South Australians," he said.

Victorian Premier Steve Bracks said the states would not agree to hand over powers without greater detail on how the new scheme would work. "Victoria restates its conditions that the rights of irrigators be protected, that there is no secret privatisation agenda and that federal funds for state water conservation projects start to flow," he said.

Mr Howard's proposal includes a nationwide investment in Australia's irrigation infrastructure to line and pipe major delivery channels; programs to improve on-farm irrigation technology and metering and to develop a new set of governance arrangements for the Murray-Darling Basin.

It would also determine a sustainable cap on surface and groundwater use in the Murray-Darling Basin; major engineering works at key sites in the basin such as the Barmah Choke and Menindee Lakes; and expand the role of the Bureau of Meteorology to provide the water data necessary for good decision making by governments and industry.

FarmOnLine

NSW to give Howard its water powers

NSW Premier Morris Iemma has today locked in NSW as the first state to agree to sign over its constitutional rights to manage the Murray Darling river system to the Federal Government.

"What the Prime Minister is proposing is in the best interests of NSW," Mr Iemma said of the Federal plan to take control of the Murray Darling Basin and invest \$10 billion to fix its problems.

The move comes ahead of Thursday's meeting between the states and Prime Minister John Howard to discuss the detail of the plan.

Mr Howard has called the meeting in response to requests from both Victorian Premier Steve Bracks and Queensland Premier Peter Beattie to hold such a meeting to provide the states with more detail on the content of the 10-year plan.

But the meeting will also be used to address the concerns South Australia's Premier, Mike Rann, has raised with the Government's \$10B plan for the Murray Darling.

The plan hinges on the States signing over their constitutional right to manage the river system to the Commonwealth - a point which has Mr Rann worried that SA's interests won't be looked after by Canberra.

"Given the importance of this issue and the need to proceed to implementation of the plan as soon as possible, I am more than happy to respond to the requests of both Mr Bracks and Mr Beattie," Mr Howard said.

"I am optimistic in believing that the states will agree to the Commonwealth proposal.

"The Commonwealth is standing ready to make that investment, but it won't work unless we fix the governance, and that is why we are asking the states to refer their powers."

However, Mr Howard has refused to speculate on legal commentary that suggests the Commonwealth may be able to force the States to comply via a High Court constitutional challenge, if they do not refer their powers voluntarily.

"What I am saying to the states is here is a solution that will fix the Murray-Darling Basin, and the whole proposal is a very generous compromise by the Commonwealth," he said.

"We are providing \$10B, and we are offering to fix this problem, but it cannot be fixed unless we fix the governance arrangements and you can only fix the governance arrangements by a referral of power."

Mr Howard has proposed holding the meeting in Canberra on Thursday, but depending on the Premiers availability, it may not take place until next Monday.

Rudd's climate summit to overhaul disaster planning

Federal Opposition leader, Kevin Rudd, says he can't be sure what impact climate change is having on the current drought in Australia.

But that has not stopped him from announcing from a drought-affected farm north of Canberra today his plans for overhauling the country's disaster management systems in line with improved climate change research.

Mr Rudd says that while the impact of climate change on the current drought is unknown, he is concerned about the effect climate change will have in the decades ahead for Australia's water resources.

Mr Rudd wants to hold a climate change summit to examine the impact of climate change on natural disasters; and to look at overhauling current planning systems so better information can be provided to local authorities to help prepare for the impacts in their areas.

"It's an open question as to whether climate change is affecting this drought," Mr Rudd said.

"What we do know from the panel of experts report is that the unfolding impact of climate change is going to affect the intensity and length of droughts in the future."

Climate change research needed to save farms: NFF

The National Farmers' Federation is demanding the Federal Government invest massively in research to help agriculture cope with its greatest ever challenge: climate change.

It follows the release over the weekend of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report, which says there is 90pc probability that human actions are accelerating climate change.

Without immediate action to cut carbon emissions around the world, temperatures could increase by as much as four degrees this century.

"The Australian farming sector is utterly dependent on weather conditions and any prolonged change in climatic patterns has the potential to plunge farmers, and the majority of Australia, into the realm of the unknown," NFF president David Crombie said.

"A vastly increased research effort is needed – sooner, rather than later – to enable all primary industries to plan, adapt and respond to greenhouse and climate change challenges ... those of today and those predicted." And while there is plenty of information at the global and national level on the action needed, Mr Crombie says a lack of localised data is hampering the response of the 130,000 farmers who manage 60pc of Australia's landmass.

"For climate change mitigation and adaptation to be possible, we must have relevant, regionally-based data to make long-term region-based farming decisions," he said.

"Within agriculture we need to target research to identify new varieties, new management systems and measure our emissions."

Meanwhile, Prime Minister John Howard has responded to the IPCC report by again pushing for the development of a nuclear energy industry.

Mr Howard says going nuclear is essential to reducing Australia's carbon emissions "in a way that does not unfairly hurt or damage the Australian economy and destroy Australian jobs".

Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd has ruled out nuclear energy as a potential solution to carbon emissions, and is still pushing for Australia to ratify the Kyoto protocol - an idea Mr Howard continues to reject.

Drought lowers lamb numbers but outlook bright

The drought is expected to lower prime lamb producer incomes and frustrate their efforts to expand production in the short term, according to Meat & Livestock Australia's 2007 Cattle and Sheep Industry Projections.

But despite the drought, MLA's chief market analyst, Peter Weeks, says sentiment within the Australian prime lamb industry remains bright.

"Lamb prices are expected to maintain historically high levels in coming years, especially in 2007, with a slight decline in production being met by on-going strong demand, particularly from export markets," Mr Weeks said.

"Provided the drought breaks in autumn, lamb prices in 2007 are expected to average above 2006 levels, especially during the second half of the year.

"However, farm incomes will be low, or even negative, for many lamb producers in 2006-07, because of the impact of the drought on the condition of lambs sold and high expenditures on feed, agistment, water and other drought related costs."

Assuming the current drought breaks in autumn 2007, lamb slaughter during 2007 is expected to fall by around 3pc to 19 million head, and by a further 2pc in 2008.

The poor 2006-07 breeding season and higher lamb retentions for flock rebuilding is likely to see new season lamb numbers fall significantly from spring 2007 to winter 2008.

The fall in lamb slaughter in 2007 and 2008 is expected to be offset by a further rise in average carcase weights, maintaining lamb production at around the 2006 record of 402,000t.

The Australian sheep flock is likely to have been hit hard by the current severe drought, with the flock forecast to decline by 5.5 million head in the year to June 2007, to around 95m head - its lowest level since 1947.

Sheep prices in 2007 are expected to increase significantly on 2006 levels provided seasonal conditions improve and sheep supplies tighten, as producers look to rebuild drought-depleted flocks.

After growing strongly over the past seven years, domestic demand for lamb is expected to be maintained in the short term at around 220,000t, even though prices are forecast to rise.

Australian lamb exports are also forecast to surpass the 2006 record by 5pc in 2007, to 154,000t.

Adelaide Advertiser

Rann is cut adrift

Prime Minister John Howard has stepped up pressure on the States reluctant to sign the Murray-Darling takeover, ahead of a meeting in Canberra on Thursday.

Weir decision could be delayed until October

A final decision on completing the controversial weir across the River Murray at Wellington could be delayed until October.

Rudd surveys the drought

With his city slicker colleagues Peter Garrett and Anthony Albanese in tow, Mr Rudd yesterday took in the situation on the Glengalla property in Southern NSW, the home of Angus beef farmers Wilio and Joy Cameron.

RIVER MURRAY: Premier 'acts like a child'

A group of NSW River Murray irrigators has accused SA of being responsible for the greatest water losses from the system.

The Murray Darling Water Crisis Management Council, a lobby group of farmers, Local Government and other water users around the Wakool Shire in the NSW Riverina says water for irrigated farming and recreation lakes in SA is wasted.

Wakool Shire Mayor Ken Trewin (**the same Mayor who welcomed those attending the 2006 MDA National Conference to his area saying any water flowing from NSW to SA was really wasted water**) accused Mr Rann of acting "like an indulged child" in opposing a Federal take-over of the Murray-Darling system.

GREENHOUSE GAS: SA pushes for carbon trading

South Australia will continue to push for a National carbon trading trading scheme, rather than an emissions tax, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

NEW PREDICTION: Flow forecast not so dire

The River Murray is not expected to stop flowing until at least May if the draw on the water source continues at its present rate. In September, it was forecast the river could become a series of stagnant pools by the start of Autumn.

Tanked up but left with an empty feeling

Why is it the environmentalists always make me feel guilty? People keep changing the rules. Just when you think you're doing the right thing for the environment, someone says it's all wrong.

SAVING WATER

The bathroom and toilet are responsible for 40 per cent of household water use. A dual flushing toilet and a water-efficient shower head can save up to 20.000 litre of water a year. * Of all water consumed in the house, about 10 per cent is attributed to water use in the kitchen. * Between 15 per cent and 20 per cent is used in the laundry. * A slow leaking tap can waste 20.000 litres a year. * Grey water is water discharged from showers, washing machines and dishwashers. Find out how to reuse grey water in the garden, or even set it up to flush your toilet.

Adelaidenow

Aquawoman - SA's new super minister

KARLENE Maywald surprised everyone in politics when she accepted a position in Mike Rann's Cabinet in 2004. State political reporter Greg Kelton comments on this morning's appointment.

It was a match which the Liberal Opposition said was fraught with danger and would place Ms Maywald, who is, after all, a National MP, in a very compromising position.

Since that time she has carried out her role as River Murray Minister with aplomb and has very strong support from Mike Rann and other senior members of Cabinet who regard her as one of the best ministers in the 15-strong line-up. Now, she becomes one of the most powerful ministers in the state with this promotion making her SA's "Aquawoman" - given almost superhuman powers by the Premier to tackle all the major water issues facing the state.

It is a move that makes a great deal of sense because in the past, the carriage of water issues has been in the hands of up to four ministers - Environment, Government Enterprises, River Murray and Infrastructure. Now, Ms Maywald will handle the lot and faces a daunting task.

Some Liberals were saying privately yesterday that she was being set up by the ALP so that if she fails they have a handy scapegoat. Ms Maywald is a tenacious, hard-working campaigner and if her previous track record is any indication, the Liberals may be waiting for a while yet.

Maywald gains surprise promotion

RIVER Murray Minister Karlene Maywald has been promoted in a surprise Cabinet reshuffle to take control of all water issues in South Australia.

In what Premier Mike Rann described as "a significant promotion", Ms Maywald becomes the Water Security Minister.

Not only will she be responsible for the River Murray but she will also take control of the huge SA Water Corporation from Government Enterprises Minister Michael Wright.

Ms Maywald, who is a member of the National Party, was sworn in at Government House this morning. Her other portfolio of Science and Information Economy has been handed to Employment Minister Paul Caica.

"It makes sense given the current national water crisis and debate and the challenges we face in SA to bring together ministerial responsibility for both the Murray and SA Water," Mr Rann said.

Mr Rann said the mini-reshuffle reflected the current challenges facing SA.

"In the case of Karlene this does really consolidate her position in terms of meeting the challenges we face as a state and nation on water security," he said.

"It just seems to be logical given the water crisis facing the nation."

Ms Maywald will also take control of the Government's water security task force which is currently chaired by Treasurer Kevin Foley.

Ms Maywald said it was an incredibly important role and function.

"Water security is not just for now, it's for future generations as well and I am looking forward to the challenges," she said.

"It will encompass the management of SA Water including responsibility for water restrictions."

Murray Valley Standard

Land owners' grave concern over weir: Weir would span over 2.5 km

* Construction 24 hours, seven days a week for weir to be built. * Local Politicians visit likely weir site Wellington Lodge. * Weir construction would disrupt the operation of Wellington Lodge.

Construction works 24 hours a day is a prospect one farming family has had to face, with their property being the likely location for the proposed weir.

Mr. McFarlane (owner of Wellington Lodge) said for the weir to be built quickly, workers would operate 24 hours a day, seven days of the week, for six months.

As part of trucking half a million tonnes of rubble required for a rock weir, a bitumen road would be built from the Princess Highway directly to the site.

Mr. McFarlane said it would be about five kilometres long and effectively split their property in half.

\$14m no help to Coorong

A \$14 million plan to refresh the Coorong seemed like a lifeline but one environmental scientist said the announcement was more political convenience.

Liberals oppose proposed weir

The State Liberal Party has announced its opposition to a temporary weir at Wellington

Rally planned against weir

This month the groups from the Coorong and Lakes areas will be holding a rally in Adelaide on Sunday, February 18th.

7th

FarmOnline

Groundwater fears grip SA's rural planning

Landowners in the south east of South Australia are concerned about the future of the region's groundwater supply.

About 70 farmers met with leading geohydrologists in Penola on Friday, to discuss groundwater supply, and in particular their fears of a proposed \$650 million pulp mill they believe will seriously deplete an already over allocated aquifer.

They say a moratorium should be placed on the issue of any further water allocations, until the State Government releases a more up-to-date water allocation plan.

The last audit of the region's water resources was compiled in 2001, and farmers say water supply has steadily decreased in the following years.

Boost for Murray-Darling water research

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission, La Trobe University and CSIRO have joined forces in a new joint venture to help manage the water resources and aquatic ecosystems of the Murray River.

La Trobe University becomes a formal partner in the re-vamped Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre (MDFRC) at a signing ceremony at its Wodonga campus today.

The new venture will see greater involvement from La Trobe University researchers, working closely with CSIRO colleagues with substantial on-going funding from the Murray-Darling Basin Commission and from the Federal Government.

The announcement comes two days before the Prime Minister's Murray-Darling summit in Canberra on Thursday, to decide whether the States will cooperate with John Howard's \$10m water plan.

MDBC chief executive, Wendy Craik, says, "The research will help us understand more about the river's nutrient cycles, algal blooms, fish and invertebrate ecology.

"The agreement reaffirms and formalises the long standing and valuable partnership that exists between CSIRO and the MDBC.

"Both organisations bring a wealth of intellectual capital and decades of expertise in disciplines which are crucial to the environmental health of the rivers and floodplains of the Basin."

The new centre will be located at La Trobe University campuses at Albury-Wodonga and Mildura.

Heavy rain eases drought, but deficits remain

During January, rain of tropical origin extended heavy falls across central and parts of eastern and southern Australia, according to the Bureau of Meteorology climate update.

These were sufficient to remove short to medium-term rainfall deficiencies.

But much of Queensland, NSW, Victoria and northern Tasmania remain affected by severe deficits.

In addition, a few regions in northern Australia have had a poor start to their wet season, with serious short-term deficiencies having developed in patches of the northern NT, Cape York Peninsula and southeast Queensland.

For the 13-month period from January 2006 to January 2007, serious to severe rainfall deficiencies affected a large part of southeast Queensland centred on about Charleville, much of the southern half of NSW, Victoria, northern and eastern Tasmania, Southeastern SA and a coastal strip in WA from Carnarvon to Albany.

Record low falls occurred along Tasmania's north coast as well as in parts of the east of that State.

It was also the driest such period on record in the mountainous regions of northeast Victoria and southeast NSW extending into parts of the southwest slopes, central tablelands and central-west, and in a few patches along the southwest coast of WA.

The worst of the deficiencies are likely to remain for some time.

Adelaide Advertiser

Wellington weir may yet bite the dust

There is now a "less than 10 per cent" probability that a new weir will be built at the bottom of the River Murray, the State's new Water security Minister says.

Maywald confident of a result

The State government was confident it would win in negotiation over how the Murray-Darling was managed in the future, Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald said yesterday.

\$160m plant stalls

Federal Funding for the \$160 million for a Spencer Gulf desalination plant has stalled over a flawed financial model put forward by the State Government.

Parched Prickles is at the sharp end of the drought

Adelaide's water restrictions are forcing native animals out of hiding as they hunt for moisture to survive.

PM warming up to reality on the weather front

Prime minister John Howard today will complete his journey from climate change sceptic to self-described climate change realist.

DEAN Jaensch: A bold first for centralist-thinking Howard

Is it due to Greenhouse? The drought? Something in the water? Whatever. The fact is that for the first time in 106 years, Australian Federalism is being transformed. And by the least likely leader. John Howard has emerged as the great Nationalist of Australian history.

Howard's climate change U-turn

Prime minister John Howard yesterday was forced to retreat from a potentially embarrassing declaration that the jury was "still out on the degree of connection" between climate change and carbon emissions.

'Aquawoman' slips out from the Liberals net

It was Karlene Maywald's day in the spotlight yesterday. She was appointed and sworn in as South Australia's answer to aquawoman, found time to to brief the media on the proposed weir (**somehow the work temporary is being dropped a lot**) at Wellington and was the target in Question Time.

River News

Ten point plan could fuel constitutional debate

Mr. Tom Rooney CEO of "Australia's online water market," Waterfind.com.au recently provided his company's response to the Prime Ministers' 10 point plan for National Water Security. Mr. Rooney said that while he expects "The plan could potentially fuel a constitutional debate, successful implementation of the Prime Ministers' Water plan could provide a positive way forward for the Nation's water resources and management of the Murray Darling basin(MDB)."

Adelaidenow

PM Edition exclusive: Garrett raises Olympic Dam concerns

LABOR environment spokesman Peter Garrett is wavering on support for the Olympic Dam expansion, saying he is personally concerned about the "ever-onward expansion of uranium mining in Australia".

In an exclusive interview for The Advertiser PM Edition, the former Midnight Oil frontman said there were "important questions" to be answered before deciding his position on the \$5 billion expansion of the BHP Billiton mine in the state's Far North.

These included whether it would be a new mine or simply an expansion of the existing uranium and copper mine.

Mr Garrett declined to express a view on the expansion, saying he intended to consult in a "collegiate fashion" with colleagues and ALP members before deciding a position to take to Labor's national conference in April.

But the long-time anti-nuclear campaigner then restated his personal opposition to the growth of uranium

mining in Australia, even though he stressed he would accept the need to argue Labor policy if the party's "no new mines" policy was changed.

"At a simple level, I think that there are serious questions about the ever-onward expansion of uranium mining in Australia, particularly in relation to issues to do with safe disposals, water use and, ultimately, the passage that the fuel takes through the proliferation system and safeguards and so on," he said.

"I think there are many issues that are attached to it but I want to get around and see people and work that up in a collegiate fashion with colleagues."

Mr Garrett's view contrasts with Premier Mike Rann - an ALP national president - who is arguing for the scrapping of Labor's opposition to new uranium mines.

Mr Rann's government is a strong supporter of the planned \$5 billion Olympic Dam expansion, which BHP Billiton says would expand mining and processing of copper from about 200,000 tonnes per year to about 500,000 tonnes per year.

Rann opposes Federal carbon trading plan

PREMIER Mike Rann says the prime ministerial taskforce's report on carbon emissions trading raises more questions than answers.

Prime Minister John Howard's Emissions Trading Task Group has issued a preliminary report supporting the concept of a carbon trading in Australia.

The taskforce's issues paper rejects a carbon tax on industry as an effective method of lowering emissions, but does not contain specific recommendations.

Instead it poses a series of questions for further consideration by the committee before its final report, due in May.

"After months and months of inaction, the prime minister today came out with a nine-page report that again talks about Australia following rather than leading," Mr Rann said.

"The nine-page paper poses more questions than answers and does little to progress action on the urgent issue of climate change."

Mr Rann said Australia needed a national carbon emissions trading scheme.

"The issues paper does not set out any clear position or views at this stage, neither does it go into any detail about what a global emissions trading scheme might look like," he said.

"The task group simply raises a number of questions and issues on which it is seeking public comment.

"The key thing is that we need an emissions trading scheme set up nationally across Australia and South Australia is keen to participate in that."

Mr Howard established the Task Group in December last year after years of maintaining that Australia should not sign the Kyoto Agreement and would not participate in a carbon trading scheme unless it included the world's largest polluters like China and the U.S.

However the worsening drought and growing evidence of human driven climate change has brought a softening of the Government's previously hardline opposition to emissions trading.

The Task Group paper does not recommend an Australian scheme but it does canvass some of the features such a scheme might have.

While arguing against a carbon tax as proposed in WA earlier this week, it says a carbon trading scheme, where industries buy and sell permits to emit greenhouse gases, could work.

"A tradeable permit market creates an explicit carbon price signal which allows business greater certainty in taking long-term investment decisions," it says.

The opening week of Federal Parliament has been dominated by the burgeoning environment debate.

As the Government and Opposition position themselves on the issue, the two new political stars,

Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull and Labor's environment and climate change spokesman, Peter Garrett have agreed to live national television debate on the issues tomorrow night.

8th

FarmOnLine

Vic concerns at Murray-Darling takeover

The fine print in the \$10 billion plan for the federal takeover of the Murray-Darling river system will be scrutinised by Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks at a meeting with the Commonwealth in Canberra tomorrow.

"We need to see the detail in the plan," Geoff Fraser, spokesperson for the Bracks Government, said.

"The rights of irrigators are of major concern.

"Victoria has managed its share of the Murray River responsibly - our farmers are efficient and we don't want to see them disadvantaged.

"We have delivered 95pc of allocations this year.

"If there is a restructuring of allocations, we need to be sure it is done fairly."

25.

Victoria is the first of the states to deliver on the Living Murray initiative - a state and commonwealth

agreement to return 500 gigalitres to the system through water saving infrastructure and deals with irrigators. "We recognise cooperation is required between government and the states on the management of the Murray-Darling system, but we need to see the detail in the proposal."

SOURCE: *Stock & Land*, Vic, updated daily on *FarmOnline*.

Carbon trading offers little for farmers

The push for the Federal Government to set up a carbon emissions trading scheme is unlikely to help farmers earn an extra dollar.

The Government has released a discussion paper on the potential for Australia's participation in a carbon trading scheme.

The paper does not make firm recommendations about carbon emissions trading, other than the need for the system to be truly global.

The fact that the discussion paper does not specifically address agriculture's needs has brought criticism from National Farmers Federation president, David Crombie.

He says it is short-sighted to exclude a farmer representative from the taskforce responsible for investigating the issue.

"We're not impressed that we weren't involved - agriculture has earned a seat at the table," Mr Crombie said.

"Farmers have achieved a 40pc reduction in carbon emissions in the past 15 years.

However, Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, has reassured the rural sector that their interests will be taken care of by the Government.

With agriculture accounting for about 12pc of Australia's emissions, mainly via methane from livestock, there have been fears that carbon pricing could affect farm profitability.

At the same time, other sectors of agriculture have hoped for a commercial opportunity from carbon trading by selling emission cuts they have achieved through adoption of techniques such as zero-til cropping, which retains more carbon in the soil.

Agriculture Minister, Peter McGauran, warns that farmers should not expect a carbon emissions trading scheme to be lucrative.

"There's considerable hope in the sector at the moment that there could be money for farmers trading greenhouse credits – the value of carbon stored on their properties," Mr McGauran said.

"We've currently got a trial going with Landcare to see how effective it might be.

"But the likelihood is it's not going to be massive.

"It's difficult to measure carbon stored at farm levels.

"And the definitions of what will and will not count is going to be difficult."

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

Worst drought areas 'need record rain'

"This is not an academic debate for the local communities that exist primarily because of the wealth derived from irrigation water.

"The feedback I am getting is "thank goodness" someone is doing something practical.

"The current drought has made us all aware of just how critical the sound management of our water resources must be and how important our irrigation communities are to Australia's economic prosperity."

SOURCE: National rural news updated daily by *FarmOnline*.

Drought-tolerant crops in demand

The just-released Pioneer 85G08 medium maturity grain sorghum has attracted interest for its drought-tolerant and stay-green characteristics.

The country may be drought-affected but when the season breaks, producers will be keenly aware of the latest summer crop options.

Pioneer Hi-Bred Australia's national sales and agronomy manager, Peter Kleinhanss, was in an upbeat mood when speaking at the company's annual Technology Show staged at its Wyreema research complex in Queensland.

Mr Kleinhanss acknowledged that drought-tolerant varieties remain a top consideration for most producers who appear resigned to growing crops in increasingly harsh conditions.

"They're asking us, 'How do we manage what we grow in less than ideal conditions?'," he said.

"We are seeing things change, as far as plant populations and row spacing are concerned, plus there's the on-going interest in hybrid varieties," Mr Kleinhanss added.

The emphasis at Pioneer's Wyreema research complex principally concentrated on corn, grain and forage sorghum crops.

The just-released 85G08 medium maturity grain sorghum has attracted interest for its drought-tolerant and stay-green characteristics.

Pioneer has noticed a big increase in corn hectares being planted in Australia over the last few years, in line with improved management techniques.

This reflects corn's status as the most widely grown crop around the world.

It's a similar story for both grain and forage sorghums, according to Pioneer's researchers who note similar growing condition challenges experienced during the last decade.

SOURCE: Extract from full report in *Queensland Country Life*.

Adelaide Advertiser

Premier in search of allies on Murray

South Australia's bid to gain support of an independent River Murray management commission will be stepped up today at a meeting in Brisbane.

DROUGHT: Famous stud forced to buy feed for horses: No hay while sun shines

Dry conditions have made the going heavy for South Australian racing dynasty. The Hayes family's 81 ha of lucerne paddocks at Murbko on the River Murray are struggling to supply feed for the World famous Lindsay Park Stud as irrigators labour under a drought prompted 40 per cent reduction in water allocation.

River legend who loved Murray dies.

Jack Seekamp, the "Riverland legend", died on Saturday night. He was 85. Mr Seekamp worked as an irrigator, hydrologist and long time campaigner, in 2004 welcoming plans to give back an extra 500 gigalitres of water to the river each year for five years.

Libs call for water changes

The Opposition has called for changes to water restrictions to improve safety for the elderly.

43.

RIVER MURRAY: Environmental impact report

Weir warning: Lakes could recede 1Km

"Premier Mike Rann and Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald would go down as the greatest environmental vandals in the history of this State (if a weir was built) says Liber MP Michael Pengilly.

River News

River Murray and Lower Lakes EC case progressing

15th

FarmOnLine

FMD's drop \$600m to finance drought

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Peter McGauran, says the latest farm management deposits (FMD) figures reveal that drought-affected farmers are drawing down on savings to finance their business operations.

FMDs give farmers a tax incentive to put aside money in good years, to help them through the lean ones.

Mr McGauran said FMD holdings for the September 2006 quarter dropped to the levels held in September

