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

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

Murray Darling Association – “For Conservation and Sustainable Development”

MDA

1st Nov

Murray Darling Association Inc - Media Release

Unchartered Drought conditions call for unchartered policy changes in the Murray Darling Basin.

This season is shaping up to be the most serious drought that the eastern states of Australia have ever faced.

The Murray Darling Association is supportive of a call by the mayor of Wakool Shire, Cr. Ken Trewin, to declare a “National state of emergency” in an effort to initiate a common sense approach to management of the critically low remaining water in storages in the Murray Darling Basin river systems.

Irrigators in Victoria and New South Wales have received from zero allocation to twenty-three per cent in the Goulburn system of their water entitlements, yet Nyah to the Sunraysia has 95% and South Australia still has around seventy per cent allocation.

The scientists put the chances of a good rain this summer at odds of less than 1:20, which are long odds when your life and livelihood depend on it. This is a crisis that is rapidly becoming a social, environmental and economic disaster for the Nation.

The Murray Darling Association’s General Manager, Ray Najar said today that, “drought is not only a farmer’s problem, it will affect towns and cities as well. The flow-on effects into secondary industry will be enormous, with milk factories, trucking and food production businesses feeling the effects. Super market prices are already indicating the increasing costs.

To consumers: Employment will be effected, and the national economy will be severely depleted with a substantial reduction in agricultural exports”.

Initiatives like the proposed super pipeline to Bendigo and Ballarat from the Goulburn system won’t be much use if the river is dry by the time it is built.

Without substantial rain in the headwaters, the Murray will be dry from the Hume Dam to the sea by this coming autumn. If that happens, all the towns along the river will be without a water source.

Adelaide will be hard hit and will have to rely heavily on its local catchments and the Storm water Recycling already in place using ASR.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that targets for environmental flows and water savings, set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), will be almost impossible to achieve in the current climate conditions.

Pressure on the States to deliver these outcomes must be put on hold until the drought is over.

The Murray Darling Association agrees with the Mayor of Wakool Shire that the only way through this drought is for all environmental flows and all permanent water transfers to cease immediately.

Mr Najar goes further to say that, “There is an urgent need for decisive action that requires:

A declaration of a “National state of emergency”, and all environmental flows to be suspended immediately.

A crisis action committee established that will provide a bi-partisan co-operative approach to the common sense management of the available water, permanent water trading to cease until the drought is over, and that a civil emergency management plan for the Murray River and the entire Murray Darling Basin be put in place immediately”.

The potential to cloud seed wherever and whenever should be also become a priority action by the government departments responsible to maintain supplies that would normally be in storage at this time of the year.

The primary objective of the plan must be to use the available water to protect communities and rural industry and ensure that the rural economy can recover as swiftly as possible after the drought is over.

A single agency must be appointed comprising knowledgeable people free of political influence to manage storage, river flows and the allocation of water to communities and farms through out the whole of the Murray Darling Basin.

Mr Najar says that “there must be recognition of the importance of supporting the social fabric of rural Australia and a genuine attempt made to ensure that the agricultural sector is preserved for the benefit of all Australians”.



Water is even more essential to the survival and recovery of rural irrigated agriculture to the economy cannot be understated”.

**1st November
Farmonline**

Australia won't budge: Greenhouse catastrophe fails to move Howard

Australia has rubbished any suggestion of a global market to trade carbon emissions, the key recommendation of the UK's Stern Climate Change report, which has sent shock waves around the world.

Greens call on Howard to set up climate change ministry

The Australian Greens today called on Prime Minister John Howard to set up a Minister for Climate Change. This is needed for Australia to comply with Britains Stern Review on the economics of climate change.

NSW extends drought assistance

Lachlan Valley, NSW, irrigators have had their fixed water charges waived as part of the NSW Government's new round of drought assistance measures. The changes were announced at Wentworth, NSW, in the far South-West of NSW this afternoon.

The River News

Water allocations may be cut further

This has happened since the article in The River News.

Both The River News and the Murray Valley Standard are running a weekly “Murray Matters” where questions put to the Minister for the River Murray Kaylene Maywald are answered.

2nd November

Drought claims new victims

Hundreds of the Coorong's pelican chicks are being left to die by their parents, which are abandoning the breeding ground under pressure from the drought.

5th November

Sunday Mail

**Drought: PM calls summit
River report forces move**

Data showing Australia's most important river system will run dry within a year has forced Prime Minister John Howard to call a summit with key State Premiers on Tuesday. According to the best scientific information considered by senior Government figures this week, on current rainfall the dams on the Murray system will be empty by May next year, threatening water supplies to our cities. And ministerial sources say supplies for cities such as Adelaide will be put at risk if there is no increased rainfall.

6th November

Adelaide Now

Drought crisis summit

PRIME Minister John Howard has been urged to call a full Council of Australian Governments meeting to tackle climate change and the impact of the worst drought on record.

Mr Howard yesterday called a summit of South Australian, Victorian and NSW premiers for tomorrow amid warnings key Murray-Darling Basin dams could be dry by May.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie yesterday asked that his state also be represented and said a full COAG meeting should be held to deal with a national crisis.

Mr Beattie said part of the Murray-Darling Basin was in Queensland and his state should play a part.

"I know this is probably particularly relating to the Murray and the three states affected, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, but, clearly, there will be broader issues that we would like to pursue," he said.

Tomorrow's summit will look at what immediate action can be taken after warnings the three dams underpinning the

Murray-Darling Basin's southern irrigated farmlands would run dry within six months.

That comes as new figures show the price of water for irrigators has increased by more than 200 per cent in the past four months, adding strain to SA farmers struggling through the drought.

Temporary licences being transferred between River Murray irrigators last month cost \$176.90 a megalitre, national water brokers, Waterfind, says.

That is up from \$72.99 a megalitre in July and is six times the \$37.11 irrigators were paying in October last year.

This October's price also was well above last year's maximum of \$101 a megalitre in July.

It still was below the national average of \$276.82 per megalitre.

SA Premier Mike Rann said the basin recorded its lowest October inflows on record last month, with just 74 gigalitres entering the system, compared with the average for the month of 1100 gigalitres.

"I will be reminding this meeting that we need to do much more in the face of this once-in-100-year drought and a record low of inflows," he said.

Parliamentary secretary for water Malcolm Turnbull, expected to play a key role in the summit, said it would focus on ensuring irrigated farmlands and towns did not run out of water.

FOOD prices will soar by Christmas as effects of the drought hit supermarkets.

The traditional Christmas turkey could cost an extra four or five dollars as increases in grain prices are passed on to consumers. Pork, beef and lamb prices also are expected to rise, although prices will fall in the short-term as producers get rid of stock. Meat and Livestock Australia has warned red meat prices could increase by 20 per cent as producers pass on increased grain prices. Seafood prices will rise with increased demand.

Cherries and other stone fruit have been affected by frost, while bananas should get slightly cheaper as the next Queensland crop ripens.

Eggs are set to rise by up to 60c/doz.

Grain prices have increased by 80 per cent in the past year. Executive director of the Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Andreas Dubs, said: "It is very hard to predict but, based on the increase in the price of grain, 10 to 15 per cent is a ballpark figure."

Coles Myer media relations manager Jim Cooper said the drought was a "serious situation".

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"We have been talking to our suppliers about the potential impact it may have on the price of some product lines," he said. "While it is fair to say that there will be price pressure on some products as a result of the drought, it is difficult for us, at this stage, to give specific details about timeframes or the extent of possible price rises."

Snowy Hydro gives flow warning

Australia's water crisis has deepened with a warning from Snowy Hydro that it will not be able to meet its minimum flow down the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

Water trading has been suspended down the two river valleys as John Howard on Saturday called an emergency meeting with the premiers of NSW, Victoria and South Australia for tomorrow.

The commonwealth is expected to propose buy-backs of water rights and emergency allocations to irrigators most seriously affected, at the hastily called meeting.

NSW Irrigators Council chief executive Doug Miell said Snowy Hydro had advised the council that October flows into the system were only half the level of the previous record low. "It really does require a major rethink of how the water that is available is allocated," Mr Miell.

Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Water Malcolm Turnbull, whose name is being canvassed for a broader environment portfolio in a ministerial reshuffle, said yesterday that the meeting was broader than the Snowy Hydro issue and would tackle the availability of water across the southern river system.

However, irrigators are counting on Snowy Hydro flows to provide a minimum stream.

Although the agreement governing Snowy Hydro allows the electricity generator to reduce flows below an agreed minimum in time of drought, the warning that it would do so will focus concern about the terms under which the scheme was corporatised.

Mr Turnbull said the Snowy usually provided only 1000 gigalitres of the 11,000 gigalitres flowing into the Murray, with the bulk of the total flow coming in winter and spring.

Since June, water from sources other than the Snowy had totalled little more than 500 gigalitres.

Mr Miell said the Snowy Hydro cuts jeopardised permanent plantings, including vineyards and orchards, as well as the dairy industry, farm stock, and those planting summer crops like rice and corn.

"It is critical that we put as much security and confidence as is possible around whatever resource is available," Mr Miell said. He said there should be a meeting of the Snowy Hydro shareholders, the federal, Victorian and NSW Governments.

Mr Turnbull said he did not want to be specific about what would be proposed to the states, but confirmed the meeting would consider emergency allocations.

"We want to make sure that all governments are working together," he said.

This will be difficult, as the three states are in very different positions. There are high-security and low-security water rights, with the latter the first to go in a drought. Nearly all Victoria's irrigators have high security rights and they are getting only 5 per cent less than normal.

However, in NSW, only 10 per cent of water rights are high security. No low-security water has yet been allocated while water carried over from last year has been cut by a fifth.

In South Australia, irrigators are getting 60 per cent of their allocation.

Victorians claim NSW has mismanaged its water, distributing too many water rights, and are unlikely to welcome proposals that their farmers should suffer to support farmers across the border.

Although the Victorian Government is in caretaker mode, Premier Steve Bracks could enter an agreement at the summit, subject to consultation with Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu.

Queensland Premier Peter Beattie, who was not invited to the water summit, yesterday called for a special meeting of the Coalition of Australia Governments involving all states to deal with the water crisis.

He has also requested that his deputy, Anna Bligh, be included in tomorrow's summit.

Mr Howard called the summit on Saturday after new data showed flows into the Murray-Darling Basin this year were the lowest on record, leading to warnings the three dams underpinning the basin's southern irrigated farmlands would run dry within six months.

He said the meeting would discuss what immediate action could be taken. "The serious water situation in the Murray-Darling Basin requires a collaborative response from both federal and state governments," Mr Howard said yesterday.

PRIME Minister John Howard is being urged to put Sydney's water crisis on the agenda at an emergency national water summit called for tomorrow.

The eastern state premiers have been summoned to Canberra for crisis talks on diminishing water supplies.

However Liberal Opposition leader Peter Debnam has urged his Federal leader to put metropolitan water shortages on the agenda as well.

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"I'd be urging the PM to give them a size 12 boot in the backside and force them into action," Mr Debnam said.

Premier Morris Iemma, who is attempting to play down his own water crisis in Sydney with perilously low dam levels, has agreed to attend the summit called for Melbourne Cup day tomorrow.

Mr Howard called Mr Iemma on Friday – on the day it was revealed Sydney's water crisis had worsened – to argue that the states were dragging their feet on the Murray Darling, where the drought has plunged the country's food belt into crisis.

But Mr Iemma threw it back at the Prime Minister, suggesting climate change had to be addressed by the Federal Government. "The Prime Minister rang me on Friday. In response to that, and in the spirit of co-operation and to listen to any ideas he may have, is the spirit in which I am attending," Mr Iemma said.

"Drought is a national disaster. We all have to change our approach to climate change.

"Mr Iemma said Sydney's supply was guaranteed and that the Government was working on long-term plans."

The water summit of the three Murray River states and the commonwealth will focus on irrigation.

However, Canberra is reluctant to crack down on irrigators and force them to reduce their consumption. Malcolm Turnbull, Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Water, said the summit of NSW, Victorian, South Australian and commonwealth leaders would not deliver solutions but look at how to manage what may be the worst drought since European settlement.

"By the end of the irrigation season in April or May, the big dams on the river . . . will be just about empty," Mr Turnbull said.

"And that raises big issues in terms of water management, how to ensure there is water for cities and towns, how do we ensure there is enough water to support our horticultural industries.

**6th November
The Daily Telegraph
Put Sydney on the agenda**

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Adelaide Advertiser **Great Barrier Reef 'already doomed'**

Australia's Great Barrier Reef is probably already doomed by global warming, according to the man behind the controversial British report that has injected new urgency into the debate.

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Drought crisis summit

Prime Minister John Howard has been urged to call a full Council of Australian Governments meeting to tackle climate change and the impact of the worse drought on record.

Farmonline **Rain continues to fall on Saturday**

Widespread rain continues to fall across the eastern states, with up to 100mm now having dumped on parts of drought-affected areas of Queensland. Widespread rain continues to fall across the eastern states. The trough has settled over a wide band from Central Queensland and northern NSW, dumping good falls on agricultural areas desperately needing a drink. Parts of drought-affected Queensland have now received up to 100mm of rain in the past week. Further south, cloud over the southeast of NSW is forming ahead of an upper trough, bringing scattered showers, while cloud circulating over the Central West in the upper trough is triggering storms.

Drought further cuts SA irrigation entitlements

Water allocations for South Australian irrigators will be reduced from 70pc to 60pc as widespread drought continues in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Water buy back plan too little and too slow: Greens

Water for highest bidders

Owners of River Murray water licences in South Australia are making millions of dollars by selling to the highest bidder, sparking accusations of profiteering.

Water regime unfairly affects less privileged

Turn the clocks forward. Imagine it is early January. The temperature is 40C. A hair-dryer wind blows from the North. A real stinker of a summer. In Burnside children are frolicking in a back yard pool but in Paralowie where children don't have such facilities they can not even play under garden sprinklers.

Help houseboat operators

South Australians have been urged to consider a houseboat cruise down the River Murray for their next holiday, to help boat operators and local communities hit by the drought. Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said houseboat operators had suffered a fall in bookings, many thinking the drought meant there was not enough water in the river. From me: - Give us a break.

