



Media Release

THE HON JOHN COBB MP
Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources
Member for Parkes

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS KEY PARTNERS IN WATER MANAGEMENT

With much of NSW continuing to be affected by drought, local councils and shires are playing a crucial role in helping to improve water use efficiency.

Addressing a gathering of local government representatives in Inverell, Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, John Cobb, said the Australian Government will continue to work with local governments on new water-saving initiatives. Mr Cobb's talk was part of the NSW Local Government and Shires Associations' 2007 Water Management Conference, which discussed topics ranging from urban water tanks to managing the Murray Darling river system.

Mr Cobb updated participants on the progress of the Australian Government's \$10 billion National Plan for Water Security; stating that "the National Plan will provide farmers with improved irrigation infrastructure, improved metering, and increased knowledge of water resources data. Water savings will be split 50:50 between irrigators and the Commonwealth, providing greater water security and increased environmental flows. These improvements will benefit the whole nation."

Under the National Plan, irrigators will be able to access Australian Government funding for water saving investments like centre pivots and lining of irrigation channels to prevent seepage.

"Although the National Plan for Water Security makes provision to address water management issues in Australia's agricultural heartland, we must also better manage our urban water resources," Mr Cobb said.

While urban water management is a state and territory government responsibility, the Australian Government is currently undertaking a range of work to encourage innovation in integrated urban water management.

Mr Cobb cited the Water Loss Management Programme as an excellent example of such work. The programme, supported by \$7 million from the Australian Government Water Fund, aims to reduce waste of drinking water by regional council water utilities.

"Australian Government Community Water Grants is a \$400 million programme, offering grants to help local community organisations save, recycle or improve the health of their local water resources. Two rounds of Community Water Grants have been undertaken, with a third round recently closed and successful applications to be announced in due course.

"In NSW the Community Water Grants program has funded 983 projects, totalling about \$40 million. Australia wide, the program has funded 475 local government projects, totalling more than \$22 million," Mr Cobb said.

The Australian Government Water Fund is a \$2.2 billion Australian Government programme to invest in water infrastructure, improved water management, and better practices in the stewardship of Australia's scarce water resources. The Fund supports practical on-ground water projects that will improve Australia's water efficiency and environmental outcomes. The Fund comprises three programmes: Water Smart Australia; Raising National Water Standards; and Community Water Grants.

Further information on the Australian Government Water Fund and the National Plan for Water Security is available at www.environment.gov.au/water/index.html

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