



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Murray system still suffering record drought**

Despite flooding rains in Queensland and parts of New South Wales, much of the Murray-Darling Basin is still suffering low water availability and the Murray system is still in drought.

In its latest Drought Update, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission says the drought is having a devastating effect on irrigators and the environment.

Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik AM said the prolonged and severe drought had magnified the environmental impacts of water extraction and river regulation.

“This has accelerated the decline of floodplain ecosystems,” she said. “The condition of the Coorong and Lower Lakes in South Australia is grave and deteriorating. Salinity in the Lower Lakes continues to rise and as water levels fall, acidification presents a significant threat.

“We are working with our partner governments to best manage the available water to meet human requirements, irrigation and to mitigate environmental decline wherever possible,” Dr Craik said.

“We are managing the Murray System to conserve as much water as possible in major storages to maximise water availability to the states in 2008/09.

“While critical urban, stock and domestic requirements for 2008/09 are reasonably assured, opening water allocations for Murray water users in 2008/09 are again expected to be very low or zero.”

Dr Craik said allocation improvements during the season would depend strongly on rainfall and inflows – particularly over winter/spring 2008.

The La Niña weather pattern had delivered above average rainfall across much of the Murray-Darling Basin bringing welcome relief for many graziers and dryland farmers, and bringing flooding in southern Queensland and the border rivers.

Despite good summer rainfall, inflows in the central and southern parts of the Basin remain low and headwater storage levels remain well below average.

“Total inflows to the Murray System in 2007-08 were more than double those of 2006-07 but still only about 25% of the long term average,” Dr Craik said.

“The drought has not loosened its grip on irrigators and the environment for much of the Murray-Darling Basin.”

A copy of the MDBC Drought Update is available for free download off the MDBC website at [www.mdbc.gov.au](http://www.mdbc.gov.au)

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