



HON WARREN TRUSS MP

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY

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SALINITY AUDIT OF MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

An audit of salinity in the Murray-Darling Basin will provide governments, rural communities, agricultural industries and conservationists with valuable new information on how to effectively manage the region.

The Audit, coordinated by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), was released by the Chairman of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and Federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss. Mr Truss said the Audit significantly increases understanding of the serious, long-term threat salinity poses to the Basin's environment and agricultural production.

"The findings of the Basin audit, and an accompanying CSIRO publication entitled *Effectiveness of Current Farming Systems in the Control of Dryland Salinity*, provide a real warning call of what could happen to the Basin's long-term environmental and agricultural viability if we do not adopt appropriate land management practices," Mr Truss said.

"Clearly, this audit is a warning signal for all stakeholders in the Basin. There will need to be changes to some industry practices if we are to stem the decline in the Basin's infrastructure, biodiversity and precious land and water resources.

"But while the Audit highlights the seriousness of the task ahead, it also provides us with a focussed, detailed assessment of the problem and offers some encouragement that the issues can be tackled. It covers individual river valleys as well as the Basin as a whole, and will allow planners and policy makers to make more informed decisions.

"Salinity is a problem shared by all sectors of the community and will require a coordinated response with Government and Industry. All Governments are committed to fighting rising salinity levels to ensure that our nation's vital natural resources are safeguarded so that land owners and their communities have a viable future.

"I know the MDBMC places a high priority on fighting salinity in the Murray-Darling Basin and it has already had some significant achievements. These include the successful implementation of its *Salinity and Drainage Strategy* that has placed tight salinity controls on new irrigation projects in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and substantially reduced saline ground water seepage into the lower Murray.

"And now, with this comprehensive Audit, we are even better equipped to manage the Basin's resources to ensure long-term environmental and agricultural sustainability."

Copies of the MDB Salinity Audit and the CSIRO publication are available from the Commission's web site: <http://www.mdbc.gov.au> or by writing to: Murray-Darling Basin Commission, GPO Box 409, CANBERRA ACT 2601.

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