

MEDIA RELEASE



Thursday, 7 September 2006

Torrumbarry Weir pool level variation during Spring

The pool level upstream of Torrumbarry Weir will be varied over a 20 cm range below the full supply level of 86.05 m AHD during Spring 2006 as part of a long-term program to limit further river bank erosion upstream of the weir, River Murray Water (RMW) General Manager David Dreverman announced today.

“This is a practical way of ‘putting into action’ some of the key environmental objectives of the Living Murray with minimal impact on river users”, Mr Dreverman said.

Last year (July – August 2005), the upper pool level was temporarily lowered by 40 cm below full supply level to enable an inspection of the river banks for erosion. A high degree of ‘notching’ was present, due in part to extended periods of stable water levels. A recommendation of that study was that re-introducing some degree of variability in water levels would assist in reducing bank erosion in the longer-term.

It is expected that the pool level will be varied over about a three weekly cycle, commencing on about 8 September. Changes will be made gradually (1-2 cm per day) measured immediately upstream of the weir, however larger variations may be observed at other locations due to flow rates and wind.

“The river level at Echuca has increased in recent weeks and is currently about 86.80 m AHD due to the increased transfer of water from Hume Dam to Lake Victoria. These higher flows provide an opportunity to vary the weir pool level with minimal impact on river users”, Mr Dreverman said.

During September, the pool level immediately upstream of Torrumbarry Weir will be varied over a range between full supply level and not more than 20 cm below full supply level (i.e. 85.85 m AHD). During October to December the pool level will be varied over a narrower range of not more than 15 cm below full supply level (i.e. 85.90 m AHD), to ensure that sufficient water can be delivered at the National Channel offtake during times of peak demand.

The planned variation of Torrumbarry Weir pool will be continually reviewed to take into account changing conditions along the River Murray system. River Murray Water will provide updates throughout the season when significant changes to this plan are required.

Mr Dreverman said: “river pumpers, boat operators and other river users upstream of Torrumbarry Weir are advised to take these changed water levels into account and make any necessary adjustments to their river activities”.

In particular boat masters are reminded that regardless of the changes to the weir pool level, they need to follow the NSW Maritime Authority's *Boating Handbook* (<http://www.maritime.nsw.gov.au/boathandling.html#inland>) which states: “continually assess the safety of the vessel’s speed” and “familiarise yourself with the area each time before attempting any high-speed activities such as water skiing or aquaplaning.”

Mr Dreverman emphasised that The *Boating Handbook* states: “inland waterways are often murky and constantly changing, so boat masters need to be aware of possible dangers and obstructions that may be hidden just below the surface” and that “it is not feasible or practical to remove all these hazards, nor to mark them all with navigation markers”.

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