



MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

PW /09

4 March 2009

\$16 MILLION TOWARDS SECURING BROKEN HILL'S WATER SUPPLY

Broken Hill is a step closer to securing its long-term water supplies with up to \$16 million in additional funding, Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, announced today.

Making the announcement in Broken Hill, Senator Wong said the funding will allow for further investigations into regional groundwater resources and the potential for managed aquifer recharge.

The Rudd Government has committed to this additional funding based on the findings from Phase One of the Broken Hill Managed Aquifer Recharge (BHMAR) Project undertaken by Geoscience Australia, which indicates the considerable potential for an aquifer storage system.

With additional funding of up to \$16 million, this project can move forward to Phase Two, which will involve data acquisition of the region's groundwater systems, achieved through airborne electro-magnetic technology and on-the-ground drilling programs.

"This innovative approach has the potential to secure Broken Hill's future water supply and could save a significant amount of the water that evaporates every year from Menindee Lakes," Senator Wong said.

"This project has the potential to return some of the water saved from evaporation losses back to the lower Darling and Murray rivers, as well as benefit upstream water management."

Using aquifers for water storage involves the intentional recharge or stocking of water into naturally occurring underground aquifers. Storing large quantities of water in aquifers has an advantage over traditional surface water reservoirs because evaporative losses are largely eliminated.

"This is the first time the Australian Government has investigated the potential of managed aquifer recharge in such detail for the region," Senator Wong said.

"It further delivers on our election commitment and meets the Water for the Future objectives to secure water supplies for all Australians."

The findings of Phase Two will also be incorporated into Part B of the Darling River Water Savings Project.

The complementary Darling River Water Savings Project is a feasibility study investigating options to improve water supply and management of the Darling River System and Menindee Lakes. It is a joint Australian and New South Wales government initiative.