



# MEDIA RELEASE

**Senator the Hon Penny Wong**

*Minister for Climate Change and Water*

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## **MORE WATER RETURNED TO MURRAY-DARLING BASIN'S STRESSED RIVERS AND WETLANDS**

Five sites in the Murray-Darling Basin will share in seven billion litres of water purchased by the Rudd Government as part of a plan to help restore the Murray-Darling Basin to health.

Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said watering at the sites in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia is expected to start in coming days, and continue through to June 2009.

“Most of the water for the sites is sourced from allocations against entitlements held by Toorale Station on the junction of the Darling and Warrego rivers, which was purchased by the NSW Government in late 2008 with funding assistance from the Australian Government,” Senator Wong said.

“The water from Toorale has flowed along the Darling River and will now provide water for critical wetlands and floodplains of the Murray River which are stressed from prolonged drought, historical over-allocation and the emerging impacts of climate change.

“The use of water at these sites is designed to sustain iconic River Red Gums and provide drought refuges for birds and fish. This will give the sites the best chance of recovery when natural inflows increase.”

The sites to receive water in the second round are:

- Hattah Lakes in north-west Victoria: Listed under the Ramsar convention and an icon site of The Living Murray program, containing River Red Gums and habitat for waterbirds and threatened species including the vulnerable Regent Parrot. The site will receive 2.124 billion litres of water recovered from the purchase of Toorale; a further 1.7 billion litres from the Victorian Government; and one billion litres through the Living Murray program.
- Lindsay Island on the Victorian and South Australian border: Part of a Living Murray icon site containing River Red Gum, Black Box woodland and diverse wetland habitats. The site will receive one billion litres from the Commonwealth for a number of small creeks and billabongs, and one billion litres from the Victorian Government.
- Backwater Lagoon in the Wangumma State Forest, west of Wentworth, New South Wales: Contains River Red Gums and habitat for vulnerable species including the Regent Parrot and the Southern Bell Frog. The site will receive one billion litres.
- Markaranka Floodplain near Waikerie, South Australia: One of four priority floodplain areas along the length of the River Murray in South Australia, containing River Red Gum communities and habitat for the vulnerable Southern Bell Frog and rare duck species. The site will receive 1.5 billion litres.
- Gum Flat on Chowilla Floodplain near Renmark in South Australia: This site is part of the Riverland Ramsar site and is in addition to those on the Chowilla Floodplain that received

environmental water in the first round in March. Gum Flat is a large floodplain site ringed by mixed aged stands of Black Box and River Red Gums. The site will receive 1.5 billion litres.

Watering sites were selected by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder based on proposals put forward by State Governments and after receiving advice from the Environmental Water Scientific Advisory Committee.

In March, the Government announced the first use of Commonwealth environmental water at four sites in South Australia: Chowilla Floodplain, Paiwalla Wetland, Katarapko Floodplain, and Rocky Gully near Murray Bridge.

Supporting healthy rivers is a key priority under Water for the Future: the Australian Government's long-term, \$12.9 billion plan to secure the water supply of all Australians.

More information about the sites receiving water and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is available at: [www.environment.gov.au/water/environmental/cewh](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/environmental/cewh)