

## Relaxation of water trading rules through Barmah Choke extended to end of September

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority announced today that relaxation of the trading rule controlling the transfer of water allocations from upstream of the Barmah Choke downstream to other stretches of the Murray River will be extended from 1 July to 30 September 2009.

Chief Executive Mr Rob Freeman said the decision, supported by all Basin governments, was based on the drought and the low water resource outlook for the 2009/10 water season.

“It is highly unlikely that channel capacity will be reached between 1 July and 30 September as a result of extending the Barmah Choke relaxation rule,” he said.

The minimal net trades through the Barmah Choke at the end of May 2009 and the low water resource outlook for the Murray system show that there was a low risk of exceeding the channel capacity of the Choke.

Mr Freeman said extending the relaxation rule would continue to enable entitlement holders above the Choke to sell their water allocations downstream.

The Barmah Choke constrains the volume of water that can pass for downstream users and delivery of additional flows from trading water allocations from upstream to downstream cannot be guaranteed.

However, because of the extended drought conditions and the lower than normal flows in the river, transfers of allocations are guaranteed.

“If weather conditions change and there is more water within the river, we may need to cease this trading arrangement,” Mr Freeman said.

“However, any allocation transfers approved up until that time would be honoured. Trade in entitlements from above to below the Choke will continue to be prohibited.

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