

MEDIA RELEASE

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Despite good winter rains, southern Basin still in the grip of record drought

Despite some good rain in June and July and a small increase in water flowing into the Murray system, the outlook for the southern part of the Murray-Darling Basin for the 2009-10 water year remains poor.

In the latest Murray-Darling Basin Authority drought update released today Chief Executive Mr Rob Freeman says Murray System inflows for July were about 330 GL.

“This was well above the historic minimum of 130 GL (in July 2006), but still only about 30 per cent of the long term average (1,170 GL).

“The two month total for June – July 2009 is tracking as the eleventh driest in 118 years of records” he said.

Mr Freeman said that large areas of the northern Basin, while not quite as severe as in the southern Basin, were also suffering from eight years of rainfall deficits.

“Elsewhere in the Basin, storage levels are still low. The total volume of water in all Basin storages managed by the MDBA and by State governments, has increased by only 900 GL over the last two months to about 21 per cent of capacity.

Mr Freeman said the situation in the lower Murray remained serious. During July, the target flow to South Australia was 1,800 ML a day compared with a normal entitlement rate of 3,500 ML a day.

“Flow to South Australia has now been below normal entitlement rates for more than two and half years and we expect it to remain that low.

“With another El Nino event predicted to bring dry conditions, the overall outlook for the 2009-10 water year unfortunately remains very poor.

“The overall objective of Authority river operations will continue to focus on maximising water availability by reducing evaporation and transmission losses,” Mr Freeman said.

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