



JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT – WATER AGREEMENT

Lower Lakes to receive at least 148 gigalitres from NSW Floods – 19/1/10

NSW Premier, Kristina Keneally and SA Premier, Mike Rann today agreed that water will be released from the NSW floodwaters to ensure that at least 148 gigalitres of water reaches the Lower Lakes.

The agreement follows the latest assessment of the floods at the Murray-Darling Basin Officials Committee meeting today.

“New South Wales and South Australia have been working cooperatively to make sure the Lower Lakes are given a reasonable flow from the water from recent floods,” Ms Keneally said.

“These floodwaters have provided at least 148 gigalitres for the Lower Lakes, which includes 48 gigalitres of water from the Living Murray Initiative’s Darling Anabranch water supply project that has been boosted by these floods.

“Right now a majority of the water from recent rainfall is still making its way downstream from north west NSW.

“This water has to travel hundreds of kilometres downstream to the Menindee Lakes before it can be released.

“In the coming weeks we’ll have a better understanding of how much water has reached Menindee Lakes after travelling from north west NSW.

“But we know that we will receive enough water in the system that we can commit to releasing enough water to provide at least 148 gigalitres to the Lower Lakes.

Premier Rann said the extra flows would prevent further environmental damage to the Lower Lakes and continue the State Government’s commitment to a fresh water solution, delaying the need for a weir at Pomanda Island.

“Together with the State Government’s 170 billion litre environmental reserve, this means that an extra 320 billion litres will flow into the Lower Lakes this year.”

“The extra water will ensure that, even if record low flows continue throughout 2010, we will maintain water levels in the Lower Lakes above the critical levels necessary to avert further environmental damage.”

“I want to thank NSW Premier Kristina Keneally for taking a truly national approach in this matter, in the spirit of the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement.

“The flows will reduce the risk of acidification in the Lower Lakes, lower salinity levels and improve the habitat for fish and water birds.

“The flow of water down the river will also mitigate the risk of further riverbank collapse.

“Critically, it reinforces South Australia’s commitment to a fresh water solution for the Lower Lakes.

“It’s also good news for communities around the Lower Lakes, who have had to bear the burden of watching the crisis in the lakes unfold on a daily basis over the last few years.

“We are conscious of how much suffering the situation in the Lower Lakes has caused for the local communities, including the Ngarrindjeri and acknowledge the efforts of so many who are fighting for the health of the Lower Lakes.”