



Media Release

40 Casey Street (PO Box 165) Tatura Victoria 3616
Telephone (03) 5833 5500 Facsimile (03) 5833 5501

Release Date: 5 March 2007

Call for expressions of interest in sale of Broken system water entitlement

Goulburn-Murray Water is seeking expressions of interest from Broken system irrigators in selling water entitlements as part of the Mokoan – Return to Wetlands project.

The Victorian Government, as part of its *Our Water Our Future* action plan, has made the decision to close Lake Mokoan and return it to the original Winton Wetlands, a decision supported by other states and the Commonwealth.

The project will secure a reliable and viable water supply for irrigators while undertaking one of the biggest wetland restoration projects in the nation's history, making available 44,000 megalitres of water each year to directly improve the health of the Broken, Goulburn, Snowy and Murray Rivers.

Goulburn-Murray Water Chief Executive Russell Cooper said a range of measures are required to ensure that reliability of water supply to Broken system irrigators is maintained after the lake is closed, including a variety of works, efficiency improvement and water entitlement purchase measures.

"In October 2006, Goulburn-Murray Water released a range of options, each providing measures to maintain existing supply reliability, for comment by irrigators," Mr Cooper said.

"The key issues identified by irrigators during the consultation process are now being considered in the development of a Final Offset Package.

"Depending on which offset option is ultimately chosen, the volume of entitlement purchase required from the Broken system could range from 1,150 to 4,640 megalitres."

The location and extent of water entitlement that may be sold by irrigators has the potential to affect the infrastructure and efficiency improvement options of the Final Offset Package. Just as important will be the need to determine the future services required for irrigators to minimise future operating costs and, hence, prices and tariffs for the Broken system.

To help finalise the Final Offset Package, the Mokoan Project Control Board has begun the process for the purchase of water entitlement within the Broken system.

"This process will ensure that any irrigators who may be interested in selling their entitlement in the future have the opportunity to consider their options now, with the intention of providing the most economical solution for all irrigators," Mr Cooper said.

The purchase of water entitlement will be conducted in two stages: first, inviting all Broken system irrigators to express their interest in selling some or all of their entitlement; and, second, commissioning a water broker to make individual contact with potential sellers.

The Control Board expects this process to produce up to 4,640 megalitres of water entitlement at a price that is equitable for both the seller and the buyer.

Further information about the project is available from www.lakemokoan.com or by calling 5761 1611.

- ENDS -

Media Contact: Garrath Darkin
Position: Corporate Communications Officer
Telephone: 03 5833 5776
Date released: **5 March 2007**