

Media Release - 10 June 2005

Broken System Reliability Reference Committee

Irrigators and Department at loggerheads over Lake Mokoan

The Broken System Reliability Reference Committee (BSRRC) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment have reached an impasse in negotiations concerning the decommissioning of Lake Mokoan.

The committee was established by Goulburn Murray Water to provide advice on actions needed to maintain water supply security to irrigators following the decommissioning of the lake.

The Chair of the Broken System Reliability Reference Committee, Ray Henderson, said the committee could not accept the Department's argument that Broken System irrigators supplied from Lake Mokoan can only expect to receive water right in 91 percent of years.

"Over the last 33 years irrigators on this system have never received less than full water right. The Department's 91 percent estimate of reliability is just not consistent with our experience," he said

"By severely underestimating the benefit Lake Mokoan provides irrigators DSE is reducing its obligation to undertake capital works that can provide irrigators with water supplies consistent with those they have traditionally received.

"In effect, DSE is robbing farmers of their water by stealth.

"Irrigators on the Broken system will not stand for this subterfuge," Mr Henderson said.

"The Broken System Reliability Reference Committee has suspended consultations with the Department. The Committee will be meeting on 30th June with irrigators to brief them on the impasse.

"We then hope to meet with the Board of Goulburn Murray Water and with the Minister for Water. The Government cannot be allowed to avoid its commitment to ensure there is no adverse impact on the security of irrigator's existing water rights following the closure of Lake Mokoan.

"Lake Mokoan is one of the first of a number of water saving projects designed to provide additional environmental water flows in Victoria.

"If the Government is allowed to take water for the environment from Lake Mokoan irrigators without compensation there will be nothing stopping them from doing the same in other areas," Mr Henderson warned.

The Meeting of Broken System Irrigators will be held at the Benalla Performing Arts and Conference Centre at 730 on Thursday 30th June.

Media Enquiries:
Ray Henderson
Chairman BSRRC