

Wednesday, 16 September 2009

SA GOVERNMENT TO INVITE IRRIGATOR WATER BIDS

The State Government will purchase permanent water entitlements from South Australian irrigators who missed out on selling to the Commonwealth under the latest round of its buyback program.

Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald says the Commonwealth's *Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin* program received more offers from irrigators willing to sell their water than money available during that round of the program.

"It is understood the Commonwealth is likely to announce further buyback programs sometime this financial year," she said.

"In the meantime, we are inviting any South Australian irrigators who had applied as part of the Commonwealth tender process but were excluded because the program was fully subscribed to contact SA Water and discuss options for selling.

"In 2003, the State Government committed to purchase water from willing sellers as part of a long-term plan to secure our critical human and environmental needs.

"However, due to the introduction of the Federal Government buyback of water for the environment, and the worsening drought, the SA Government has been concentrating on the purchase of temporary water in recent times.

"We understand that many irrigators had factored water sales through the Commonwealth's buyback into their business plans and now as a result of the full subscription of the program, are uncertain about the future.

"The State Government is willing to purchase up to 11.5 GL of permanent water entitlements at the current market price.

"Available water from these licences will initially contribute to our accumulation of 2010-11 critical human needs."

Eligible sellers for the State Government offer must hold their water on a South Australian River Murray licence and must be able to produce their letter from the Commonwealth advising the program was fully subscribed.

Full details of the expressions of interest process will be available from SA Water on Monday, September 21, 2009. Applications will need to be lodged by close of business on Friday, October 9, 2009.