



25 November 2009

Lachlan Valley water users doing the right thing

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss today revealed a covert compliance operation in the Lachlan Valley found that the overwhelming majority of licensed water users are complying with their licence conditions.

A team of NSW Office of Water compliance officers, together with staff from NSW Fisheries, were recently deployed to the drought-stricken region to undertake surprise inspections of river and groundwater pumps and bores.

“Over 200 water extractions works were inspected and of these, only 11 alleged breaches were found for reasons such as having the wrong pipe size, or not having a meter fitted,” Mr Harriss said.

“Investigations into these alleged breaches are continuing.

“This means that the vast majority of licensed water users in the Lachlan Valley are doing the right thing in these very dry and challenging conditions.”

The Commissioner said that the inspections were carried out just as new water restrictions came into force in the Lachlan Valley to conserve water for critical human needs.

“While this operation focused on ensuring that licensed pumps and bores are operated in accordance with licence conditions, we’ll now also monitor compliance with the new water restrictions,” he said.

“NSW Government staff will remain out and about in the Lachlan Valley and any reports of suspected breaches will be followed-up by NSW Office of Water staff.”

The Commissioner said that the severe water shortage in the Lachlan Valley was continuing and that it was likely that flows in the Lachlan River downstream of Condobolin would cease any day now.

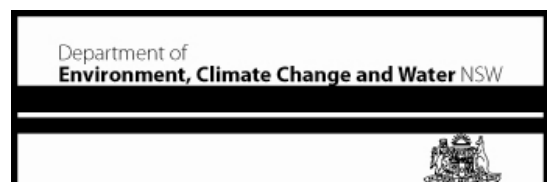
“Contingency plans are in place and local water utilities and rural landholders are ready to cart water when needed,” he said.

“The NSW Government has committed \$250,000 to subsidise 50 per cent of the cost to cart water, which we expect to cost households about \$100 a week.”

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“A further \$2.1 million will be provided to local water utilities to help with drilling new town water supply bores.

“Investigations and test bores are underway for Forbes, Condobolin, Lake Cargelligo and Euabalong, while a second bore is already under construction for Ivanhoe.”

Mr Harriss reminded water users that tougher penalties for non-compliance came into effect on 1 January this year. The maximum penalties for water theft have increased from \$132,000 to \$1.1 million for individuals and from \$275,000 to \$2.2 million for corporations, and for the first time water thieves could face up to two years in prison in addition to a fine.

The latest Lachlan Valley Critical Water Planning communiqué and information on the water restrictions are available on the NSW Office of Water’s website: www.water.nsw.gov.au

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