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CHANGES TO CARRYOVER RULES GIVE IRRIGATORS GREATER CHOICE

The Brumby Government is providing greater flexibility to water users in northern Victoria by allowing them to carryover more water into the 2009/10 season.

Water Minister Tim Holding said irrigators and urban water corporations would be able to carry over any unused water up to 50 per cent of their water entitlement – an increase from the current limit of 30 per cent.

“The Brumby Government is continuing to stand up for Victorian farmers and regional communities by providing drought assistance, improving water market rules and undertaking record investment in upgrading irrigation systems,” Mr Holding said.

“An increase to the volume of water that can be carried over the following year gives irrigators more choice about when to use their water allocations particularly during the ongoing drought.”

Prior to carryover being introduced in Victoria, irrigators lost any unused water at the end of irrigation seasons which in some cases resulted in the ineffective use of water late in the irrigation season.

Carryover was introduced permanently in late 2007, to allow irrigators to keep their water if it was more valuable to them in the following season.

The new change means irrigators can carry over water up to 50 per cent of their entitlement to help meet their needs in to 2009/10. Water carried over plus next season’s allocations must not exceed 100 per cent of the customer’s entitlement.

Mr Holding said the increase of carryover follows extensive consultation with the regional water corporations, and their customer committees, local councils, Victorian Farmers Federation, Northern Victorian Irrigators, environmental groups and other stakeholders.

“Consultation with stakeholder representatives and through public forums has highlighted that many water users want more flexible carryover rules,” he said.

“Irrigators have adopted carryover enthusiastically, with 275,000 megalitres of water transferred over this year - more than twice as much water as when carryover was first introduced.”

Mr Holding said the Brumby Government was also considering further changes in advance of the 2010/11 irrigation season and would continue consultation to finalise those details.

“In response to concerns about water being lost if allocations return to 100 per cent a proposal to enable entitlement holders to only lose their carryover when storages physically spill is being considered as part of the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy,” he said.

Further information on carryover rules is available from the rural water corporations, Goulburn-Murray Water and Lower Murray Water or at www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern