

Tuesday, 4 December, 2007

HOLDING: CARRYOVER HERE TO STAY

Irrigators in northern Victoria will now be able to carryover a portion of unused water at the end of each season to help them better manage their water resources.

Water Minister Tim Holding said the permanent introduction of carryover would give drought-affected irrigators more flexibility in managing their water from one year to the next.

“Carryover will give irrigators more choice about when to use their water allocations particularly during the ongoing drought conditions,” he said.

Mr Holding said a pilot project conducted with Murray and Goulburn irrigators over the past year had been very successful.

“Carryover worked well this year, with a total of 130 gigalitres carried over from last season to this season,” he said.

“Most of the carryover was on the Murray, where allocations last season were comparatively good, and it has provided significant benefits for many irrigators facing record low allocations on that system this year.”

A review of the pilot project found there was widespread support among irrigator representative bodies for carryover to continue in some form.

Mr Holding said carryover would continue with the same rules that applied in 2007.

“Under these rules, irrigators can carry over a volume of water up to 30 per cent of their high reliability and low reliability entitlements to next year,” Mr Holding said.

“All water carried over will be credited first to customers’ high reliability accounts. Water carried over plus next season’s allocations must not exceed 100 per cent of the customer’s entitlement.

“I encourage customers to contact their local water authorities for a detailed explanation of the rules and conditions for carryover.”

The Department of Sustainability and Environment will continue to review the rules particularly to reduce the risk of water being lost if allocations return to 100 per cent.

Mr Holding said that any future changes would only occur after thorough consultation with stakeholders.

“Consultation will begin when allocations reach 80 per cent or greater on either the Murray or Goulburn system, in time to put any amendments in place for the following year,” he said.

The Victorian Government has decided the ban on trading water to NSW after the end of February is no longer necessary, and it has been removed.