



# **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Relaxation of water trading rules through Barmah Choke extended into 2008/09**

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission announced today that relaxation of the trading rule controlling the transfer of water allocations from upstream of the Barmah Choke downstream to other stretches of the Murray River will be relaxed until the end of October 2008.

Acting Chief Executive Mr David Dreverman said a review of water allocation transfers through the Barmah Choke over the past seven months showed there was virtually no risk of exceeding the channel capacity of the river.

The choke runs for about 50 kilometres between Tocumwal and Barmah where the narrowing of the river channel was formed through geological movements and river deviation over thousands of years.

“Allocation transfers downstream through the Barmah Choke are not normally allowed because the Choke constrains the volume of water that can pass and we cannot guarantee delivery every season,” Mr Dreverman said.

“However, because of the extended drought conditions and the lower than normal flows in the river, we will now be able to guarantee any transferred allocations.

“The outlook for the 2008-09 water year indicates another dry season with low allocations being predicted.

“It is therefore unlikely that channel capacity constraints would be experienced next season as a result of extending the Barmah Choke relaxation rule,” he said.

Dr Craik said extending the relaxation rule would enable entitlement holders above the Choke to sell their water allocations to downstream users which will assist them in managing their irrigation businesses.

“If weather conditions change and we have more water within the river, we may need to cease this trading arrangement. However, any allocation transfers approved up until that time would be honoured,” Mr Dreverman said.

Trade in entitlements from above to below the Choke will continue to be prohibited.

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