



*Australian Government Minister for
Climate Change and Water*
Senator the Hon Penny Wong



*NSW Minister for Water and
Regional Development*
The Hon Phillip Costa MP

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

29 September 2009

PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DARLING RIVER WATER SAVINGS PROJECT

Public information sessions will be held this week at Wentworth, Menindee and Broken Hill to update the community on the Darling River Water Savings Project, which aims to reduce the amount of water lost through evaporation from Menindee Lakes.

Federal Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and New South Wales Minister for Water and Regional Development, Phillip Costa, said the sessions would provide the community with an opportunity to hear direct from the project's steering committee.

"The Rudd Government made an election commitment of up to \$400 million to reduce evaporative water losses at Menindee Lakes, secure Broken Hill's water supply, and return up to 200 billion litres of water to the rivers and wetlands of the Murray-Darling Basin," Senator Wong said.

"Community input is essential to the success of this project as we get on with the job of putting the Murray-Darling Basin back onto a sustainable footing."

Minister Costa said consultant Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) had been engaged late last year to undertake Part B of the project: assessing six options for reconfiguring Menindee Lakes to achieve water savings, as well as assessing options for securing Broken Hill's water supply.

"The project's steering committee will now conduct information sessions to brief members of the public on the first stage outcomes of the SKM study, and provide information on the overall project and its next steps," Minister Costa said.

"I encourage community members of Wentworth, Menindee and Broken Hill to attend the sessions and to have a say in the ongoing development of this vital project.

"Community input from these sessions will help to inform development of the project's final report, which will include recommended strategies for saving water in Menindee Lakes and securing Broken Hill's water supplies."

The New South Wales and Australian governments have each committed \$650,000 to the Darling River Water Savings Project, due to deliver a final report and strategic plan by the end of the year.

In addition, the Australian Government's complementary Broken Hill Managed Aquifer Recharge project is investigating regional groundwater resources and the potential for managed aquifer recharge.

This project has the potential to secure Broken Hill's future water supply and save a significant amount of water that evaporates each year from Menindee Lakes.

The following public information sessions are scheduled:

Wentworth – Memorial Rooms, 66 Darling St
Tuesday 29 September 2009 7.30pm to 9.30pm

Menindee – Menindee Community Hall, Cnr of Yartla and Perry Streets
Wednesday 30 September 2009 12.30pm to 2.30pm

Broken Hill – Musicians Club, 276 Crystal St
Wednesday 30 September 2009 7.30pm to 9.30pm