

## Appendix C

ACT Government press release – water plan

**Environmental impact statement**

February 2009

## Enlarged Cotter Dam, Murrumbidgee extraction and pilot purification plant highlights of water plan

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# ENLARGED COTTER DAM, MURRUMBIDGEE EXTRACTION AND PILOT PURIFICATION PLANT HIGHLIGHTS OF WATER PLAN

The Cotter Dam is to be massively enlarged from its current 4 gigalitre capacity to 78 gigalitres, water is to be transferred from the Murrumbidgee to Googong Dam and a demonstration water purification plant will be designed to test state-of-the-art recycling technology, though the water will not be added to the drinking supply, Chief Minister and Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Jon Stanhope, has announced.

The projects are among a suite of initiatives announced this morning in response to ACTEW's recommendations for securing the ACT's water supply.

"Our region has historically been dependent on rainfall, and as the drought continues, it is essential that we put in place a greater range of water security measures – incorporating both supply and demand," Mr Stanhope said today. "Canberrans have done extraordinarily well, reducing water use by about 13% and are well on target to cut consumption by 25% by 2023. But climate change and increasing uncertainty have made it essential that we act – and act now. While our existing infrastructure is adequate for wet or average years, we must develop the capacity to cope with extended dry periods.

"Last year the volume of water flowing into our dams was far exceeded by the amount we used. Inflows amounted to just a third of the community's average consumption. Such a situation cannot be sustained, year after year. The decisions announced today will allow us to better manage demand as well as diversifying our water supply options — both crucial elements in any plan for water security."

The range of water security measures that will be implemented include:

1. enlarging the Cotter Dam from 4 gigalitres (GL) to 78 GL, with planning and design work to begin immediately and work expected to be completed within three to five years ( at a capital cost of about \$145 million);
2. the installation of infrastructure to increase the volume of water transferred from the Murrumbidgee River to the Googong Dam (about \$70 million);
3. pursuing the possibility of purchasing water from Tantangara Dam (about \$38 million);
4. design of a demonstration Water Purification Plant, with the water produced during demonstration to be used for purposes other than drinking (about \$6 million will be spent during the year-long design phase);
5. increasing funding for demand reduction measures by \$2 million;
6. investigating the extension of Permanent Water Conservation Measures;
7. implementing a pilot Smart Metering program; and

8. voluntarily off-setting the additional greenhouse gases generated by these projects.

“Increasing the capacity of the Cotter Reservoir from 4 GL to 78 GL will increase total storage capacity for the ACT region by 35%,” Mr Stanhope said. “In simple terms, it will ‘make a small bucket much bigger’. And as this dam is located in a productive catchment, it will significantly increase the total yield of our water supply system.

“Securing water from the Murrumbidgee River and from Tantangara Dam will allow us to top up Googong Reservoir - now a half-empty bucket. The Googong catchment has recently had low inflows, limiting the amount of water that can be drawn from the dam. These measures will allow Googong Dam to be topped up in average years, providing greater water security during drought periods.

“By helping consumers use water more wisely, through better demand management, we have the potential to slow the draw-down of water from our dams. These measures have the advantage that they can be implemented quickly.

“Water purification is the measure that is least subject to fluctuations in climate and therefore provides the greatest reliability. However, the Water Security Taskforce, the Expert Panel on Health and the e-Water Cooperative Research Centre all believe that purification warrants further analysis. The Government has therefore approved the design of a pilot demonstration plant for research and monitoring. The water from during demonstration will not be added to the drinking supply. Funding is being sought from the National Water Fund for this project.

The Chief Minister said the projects would all have an impact on the price of water to householders, but he cautioned that the increases would occur over a number of years. The Government would explore ways to better shield low-income earners from the impact of price rises, not just through concessions, but also through helping them to manage their demand.

Mr Stanhope said water security was inextricably linked to future climate conditions and it was important to ensure that the ‘solutions’ pursued did not exacerbate the effects of climate change. The Government had therefore agreed to voluntarily offset additional greenhouse gas emissions associated with the operation of all water security projects.

Mr Stanhope thanked the many thousands of Canberrans who had contributed to the debate during the community consultation phase and the Water Security Taskforce and its Advisory Panel for their analysis of ACTEW's *Water2WATER* proposal and its July 2007 recommendations to the Government on *Water Security for the ACT and Region*.

The full report by the Water Security Taskforce and fact sheets on each of the water security measures are available at: [www.thinkwater.act.gov.au](http://www.thinkwater.act.gov.au).

Statement Ends

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