



Minister for Water

Ref: DSE072121

File: CS/08/3015-2



121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
GPO Box 4509
Melbourne Victoria 3001
Telephone: (03) 8684 8000
Facsimile: (03) 8684 8014

Mr Robbie Alexander
robertalex.1@optusnet.com.au

02 SEP 2010

Dear Mr Alexander

ENVIRONMENTAL FLOW - LODDON RIVER

Thank you for your email dated 27 July 2010 regarding environmental flows in the Loddon River.

The Victorian Government is committed to protecting and improving the health of the Loddon River. As part of this commitment, a legal entitlement to provide water for the environment was created in 2005, the Loddon Environmental Reserve Bulk Entitlement. Under the provisions of this entitlement, the Loddon River is subject to certain environmental flow provisions at various points along the river, which are designed to support the environmental values.

However, as you are aware, much of northern Victoria, including the Loddon River, has suffered from the worst drought on record. The unprecedented conditions over the past 10 years have meant the water in the Loddon system has been insufficient to meet all irrigation, domestic and stock and environmental needs.

Despite the recent good rainfalls that have provided a much needed flush in the Loddon River, the prospect of on-going drought and climate change poses significant challenges for our river system.

The Government recognises these challenges and in late 2009 released the *Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy* (NRSWS). This strategy assesses all future water needs, assesses risks to water resources, including climate change, and determines appropriate actions to address those risks. The NRSWS has established water recovery targets for stressed rivers in northern Victoria, including an additional 12 billion litres of water to restore the health of the Loddon River. This recovery target was provided to the Commonwealth Government as a prospectus to guide its \$3.1 billion water purchase program and inform the development of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan as it relates to northern Victoria. The NRSWS can be downloaded from the following website: <http://www.ourwater.vic.gov.au/programs/sws/northern>.

Privacy Statement

Any personal information about you or a third party in your correspondence will be protected under the provisions of the *Information Privacy Act 2000*. It will only be used or disclosed to appropriate Ministerial, Statutory Authority, or departmental staff in regard to the purpose for which it was provided, unless required or authorised by law. Enquiries about access to information about you held by the Department should be directed to the Manager Privacy, Department of Sustainability & Environment, PO Box 500, East Melbourne, 3002.



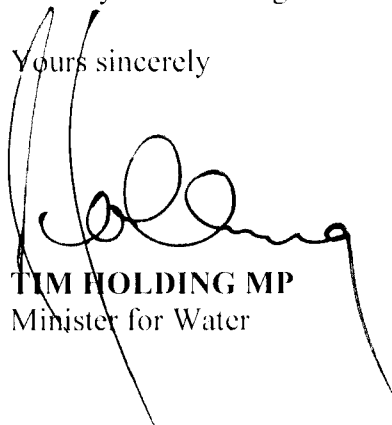
In the meantime, the completion of the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project has freed up some water savings for the Loddon River, because former supplies to towns and farms on the Wimmera system via the Western Waranga Channel are now no longer needed. This will result in an environmental entitlement for an additional 7400 million litres a year on average for the Loddon River by the end of 2010.

In addition, 300 million litres of water savings from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline will be provided to Little Lake Boort to provide social and recreational benefits to the Boort community.

Should you have further questions regarding the management of environmental flows in the Loddon River, please contact the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) on (03) 5448 7124 or visit its website: http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au/What_We_Do/Rivers/index.aspx. The NCCMA is the responsible agency for managing the release of environmental flows, including the savings from the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline Project, in the Loddon system.

Thank you for raising this matter with me.

Yours sincerely



TIM HOLDING MP
Minister for Water