

## MEDIA NOTE

August 2009

### National Water Week 2009

#### Synopsis

- National Water Week 2009 is hosted by the Australian Water Association, in partnership with the National Water Commission
- The program is nationally focussed, and provides an umbrella for the water sector to engage with the community and promote on water education and literacy
- This year's theme 'Securing Our Water Future' provides an opportunity for the water sector to dialogue with the community on the complex issues surrounding long-term water security and diversified water supplies.
- *Water has many sources, many users, and is everyone's responsibility.*



#### Background

National Water Week was first held in 1993. The event aims to increase community awareness of, and participation in the protection and conservation of water resources and habitats.

National Water Week is the only event in Australia that provides a *national* focus for the achievement of improved water management, awareness and conservation. Since 2005, the Australian Water Association has been working to provide national coordination and a centralised hub for the event, allowing a national focus but retaining its emphasis on local events and community participation.

In 2009, National Water Week is hosted by the Australian Water Association in partnership with the National Water Commission.

#### National Water Week 2009 – 'Securing Our Water Future'

In the face of climate uncertainty, Australia needs to ensure that we have adequate, safe water supplies for critical human needs, agriculture, and the environment.

Whilst this is one of the most fundamental challenges facing society, it can be a difficult concept to communicate, especially in a nation with as diverse climates as Australia, and with a population that has generally had unlimited access to cheap water for the decades prior to our most recent drought.

Australia's water suppliers have some common threads in how to address this challenge. One of the approaches implemented is *diversifying water supplies*. This means no longer relying on one main water supply (usually dams), and looking at other ways of ensuring that our water supplies are adequate so that we don't run out of water in the future.

Diversifying water supplies usually includes the following:

- Climate-independent methods of sourcing water (e.g., desalination and recycling)
- Increasing efficiency (by ensuring adequate infrastructure, reducing leakage and evaporation from the systems etc.; as well as efficient water use/savings by water customers)



National Water Week's theme for 2009 – *Securing Our Water Future* - is an opportunity for stakeholders in the water sector to engage the community and to provide educational materials and opportunities for dialogue with the community on these complex issues.

Current science tells us that water supply methods such as desalination and recycling are safe and effective methods for securing water supplies, and are particularly necessary in the face of climate uncertainty. And depending on the geography of an area, these may need to make up a part of our water supplies.

The key message of National Water Week for 2009 is that water has *many sources, many users, and is everyone's responsibility*.

## Engaging the Community

Participation in water management is a social priority that is here to stay, crossing generations and geographical boundaries. National Water Week provides a special emphasis on fostering grass-roots participation and behavioural change through involvement by community groups, water industry, schools and media.

A dedicated online resource functions as the hub for information and activities, allowing community, environment, industry and government groups to plan and promote the events they are holding during National Water Week. The National Water Week website is also a resource for educational activities.

The AWA hosts and provides the content for the national web site which provides the water industry and the broader community:

- Access for water and environmental organisations to create, register and promote their water-related events being held during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of October each year
- A functional search mechanism for the public to identify and get involved in water week activities
- Non-commercial messages and updates for key stakeholders to create ongoing communication with the water industry, water educators and the broader community
- Links to relevant organisations and water resources, etc.

In 2009, The Australian Water Association is undertaking a short survey to gauge the community's perceptions of water sources. The results of this attitudinal survey will be released at the launch of National Water Week 2009.

## Media Opportunities

A number of opportunities for media will exist in the lead-up to, and duration of National Water Week 2009. This will include local, State and national events and news.

An official launch event will take place on Monday 19 November, which will feature key government and water sector experts. To register your interest in attending this launch, please email [enyers@awa.asn.au](mailto:enyers@awa.asn.au)

## More information

- National Water Week brochure for water industry and stakeholders
- [www.nationalwaterweek.org.au](http://www.nationalwaterweek.org.au)

For interviews, photos or further information on media opportunities regarding National Water week, please contact Edie Nyers, Communications and Marketing Manager, AWA at [enyers@awa.asn.au](mailto:enyers@awa.asn.au) or (02) 9467 8416.