



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

**MEDIA ALERT**

Issued: 16 June 2003

## Environment Australia to appear at inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities

*Public hearing in Canberra, Wednesday 18 June, 2003*

The House of Representatives Agriculture Committee is examining the role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable future water supplies for communities and industries in rural and regional Australia.

This Wednesday (18 June) the committee will conduct the fifteenth public hearing of its inquiry. Appearing will be representatives of the Department of the Environment and Heritage ('Environment Australia').

Environment Australia ('EA')(submission 150, available on the inquiry website) believes that the conservation and sustainable management of Australia's surface and ground water resources is one of the key natural resource issues facing Australia today.

**EA says the health of Australia's surface and groundwater systems continues to deteriorate due to increasing pressures to extract water for consumptive use. It says the need to strike an appropriate balance between the competing demands being made on rivers, streams, wetlands and groundwater systems is an urgent one.**

The submission argues that it is essential that processes of water allocation take climate variability and climate change into account to avoid over-estimation of sustainable yields of water from catchments and over-allocation of entitlements over the long term.

The Committee Chair, Mrs Kay Elson MP, says the inquiry has generated considerable interest around Australia, with more than 150 submissions received from concerned organisations and individuals.

All submissions appear on the inquiry website at:  
[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/wateringq/subs.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/wateringq/subs.htm)

"Getting water management right, which includes the balance of allocations between different users, is crucial not only for the prosperity of rural Australia, but the nation as a whole," Mrs Elson said.

Media and the public are most welcome to attend the public hearing, details of which appear below.

**PUBLIC HEARING:** 5pm, Wednesday 18 June 2003  
**WHERE:** Committee Room 1R3, Parliament House, Canberra  
**Scheduled Witness:** Environment Australia

A transcript of the hearing will appear on the inquiry website a few days after the hearing.

**For media comment, please contact:**

**Mrs Kay Elson MP**, Chair, House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee, on (02) 6277 4274

For background information, including the full terms of reference and copies of submissions, please contact the Committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4500 or visit the Inquiry website at  
[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/wateringq/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/primind/wateringq/index.htm)