



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**MEDIA RELEASE**

Issued: 3 July 2002

**Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry**

## NEW INQUIRY

# **Inquiry into future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities**

A detailed and wide-ranging inquiry into current and future water availability in rural Australia is to be undertaken by the House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

The inquiry will look at the role of the Commonwealth in ensuring adequate and sustainable supply of water in rural and regional Australia.

House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee Chair, Mrs Kay Elson MP, said the inquiry would examine water availability in all jurisdictions, and in particular the provision of future water supplies for Australia's rural industries and communities.

"Getting water management right, so that water is available when and where it is needed on a sustainable basis, is crucial not only for the prosperity of rural Australia, but the nation as a whole," Mrs Elson said.

"We cannot afford, as a nation, to manage water in an ineffective, inefficient or cumbersome way.

"Rural industries and communities generate production of almost \$30 billion a year. Sales turnover and food processing is valued at \$55 billion a year. The entire sector employs more than 470,000 Australians.

"That production, those jobs, and those communities are all jeopardised if we do not get water management right."

In addition to examining the provision, allocation, distribution and usage of water, Mrs Elson said the committee will examine issues surrounding weather prediction, the reliability of forecasting systems and current scientific research for adapting natural processes in the face of climate change.

"One issue we will have to look at is the feasibility of cloud seeding, to alleviate drought conditions, such as rural Australia is now experiencing," Mrs Elson said.

The inquiry will also examine scientific research on the options available for managing water for Australian agriculture in the face of climate change.

The inquiry arose out of a request by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon. Warren Truss, MP.

Submissions are being sought by **Friday 30 August 2002**. After submissions have been considered, public hearings will be held to collect further evidence.

For **media comment**, please contact:

Kay Elson, House Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee Chair, on (07) 3807 6340

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