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DOMESTIC OUTDOOR WATERING ON HOLD FOR JULY

Minister for Water Security Karlene Maywald says South Australia will be required to adopt more stringent restrictions on outside domestic watering from July because of record low inflows to the River Murray.

“The Prime Minister and Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia have reached an interim agreement on water sharing arrangements as a consequence of the continuing critical state of the Murray,” she said.

“One of the conditions of this agreement is that all towns and cities which depend on the River Murray must further restrict outside domestic watering.

“Temporary tougher restrictions, including a ban on watering lawns, will be placed on domestic outdoor watering during July to ensure that South Australia receives its share of the small amount of Murray water that is likely to be available over the next 12 months.”

Minister Maywald says in 11 of the past 12 months, the River Murray system has received the lowest inflows on record, which is causing environmental damage to the waterway and enormous social and economic stress to those communities relying on its supply.

“While local rainfall in Adelaide will help refill our own reservoirs, the tougher restrictions on watering will help our River Murray recover from the current drought – every little bit helps.

“We are asking people to turn off their outside taps and let nature keep our gardens alive during July.

“This is all about science and commonsense – the science tells us the river needs help to recover and commonsense tells us we should not be using sprinklers in the middle of winter.”

Under the new rules for outdoor watering:

- The use of household sprinklers, hoses and watering systems, including drippers and any watering of lawns, will be banned during July.
- Buckets and watering cans will be allowed for outdoor trees, shrubs and plants.
- The use of greywater, by buckets and hoses, can continue inline with the requirements of the Department of Health.
- There are no restrictions on the use of water from rainwater tanks.
- All Level 3 restrictions relating to nurseries, car washing, pools, spas, fountains and ponds will remain unchanged.

People who are unable to carry buckets or watering cans due to age or disability can apply for a permit from SA Water to allow the use of a hand-held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle during certain hours.

Minister Maywald says recent rainfall in the Adelaide Hills has provided a slight improvement to reservoir levels, which are now 65 percent full.

“However the River Murray system supplies water to more than 90 percent of South Australians and the drought is still affecting rainfall and inflows in that system.

“The whole Murray-Darling Basin catchment needs sustained high inflows this winter and spring to begin the river’s recovery and for metropolitan restrictions to be relaxed.”

Minister Maywald says further assessment in July will determine if the tougher restrictions on outdoor watering will need to be extended into August and beyond.

She congratulated all South Australians on their efforts to conserve water, particularly with consumption falling significantly because of Level 3 restrictions.

From January 1 to June 14, Adelaide’s consumption was 70,942 million litres. This is 17% lower than for the same period last year (82,607 million litres) and is nearly one-quarter less than the previous drought in 2003.

“People can still garden and support their local nursery by buying up on mulch, water saving crystals, soil conditioners and low water-use plants and preparing their gardens now for spring and summer.

“In the meantime, SA Water will work with sporting grounds and industry sectors to ensure efficient watering practices and to develop best practice policies.”

Full details of the Level 3 restrictions and the temporary ban of outdoor watering can be found on the SA Water website (www.sawater.com.au) or by calling the water restrictions hotline on 1800 130 952.