

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT(Hon. David Fairbairn, D.F.C., M.P.)SNOWY WATER HELPS FARMERS

The Snowy Mountains Scheme this summer is helping drought-affected farmers in the Murray and Murrumbidgee Valleys.

The Minister for National Development (Mr. Fairbairn) said today that the Scheme would provide nearly one million acre feet of water this irrigation season for irrigators along these rivers thus augmenting the natural flows which have been greatly reduced because of the drought.

He said the Snowy Mountains Council, in accordance with the Snowy Mountains Agreement and in response to requests made by the River Murray Commission and the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission of New South Wales would provide:

- . For the Murray, as from May 1, 1967 a diversion of nearly 400,000 acre feet from the Snowy to the Murray basin.
- . For the Tumut/Murrumbidgee, 70,000 acre feet a month for eight months from September 1.

"Many representations have been made to me and to the Snowy Mountains Council for releases of water for irrigation purposes from Lake Eucumbene, the principal storage of the Snowy Mountains Scheme," Mr. Fairbairn said.

"There is apparently a widespread impression that the lake is full and that the Council is holding back water for use in generating electricity next winter.

"The situation is that streamflows in the Snowy area are the lowest recorded since their measurement commenced over 60 years ago. As a result Lake Eucumbene is only about one third full.

"However, despite the limited resources and the need to stretch them as far as possible, the Council has guaranteed considerable quantities of water for the Murray and Murrumbidgee irrigators".

Mr. Fairbairn stressed that in the present circumstances it was not possible for the Council to increase these guarantees. Some reserves had to be held in Lake Eucumbene to safeguard both irrigators and electricity consumers against the possibility of an extension of the drought into next season.

CANBERRA.

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