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CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM FOR 2010-11 WATER YEAR

Minister for the River Murray Paul Caica said today South Australia will begin the 2010-11 water year in a much better position than in the past three years.

Mr Caica says the latest Murray-Darling Basin Authority resource assessment includes 80 billion litres of additional water for South Australia, reflecting the improved storage within the Menindee Lakes today.

“This means there will be more water available for the environment and puts us in a good position to accumulate a substantial amount of our critical human water needs for 2011/12 early in the water year,” Mr Caica said during a tour of the Coorong and Lower Lakes.

“It also means South Australian irrigators can expect the opening allocation to be announced on 1 July to be better than they have received in recent years.”

Mr Caica says it is still too early to confirm the exact level of opening allocations.

“But I can confirm that it will be greater than in the past three years when opening allocations were 4%, 2% and 2% respectively,” he says.

“By the end of August, there is a 95% chance that allocations will reach at least 25%. This compares with an actual allocation of only 10% at the end of August 2009.

“Irrigators will also be able to access 100% of their carryover entitlements.”

Mr Caica reminded irrigators allocations in South Australia are to remain at 62% until the end of this month, the highest level since November 2006.

River Murray storages remain low in comparison to the long-term averages. The current volume in Hume, Dartmouth, Menindee Lakes and Lake Victoria is 3785 gigalitres (GL) (40% capacity), compared to 1455 GL (16%) at this time last year.

On a note of caution, inflows into the River Murray System for May have remained considerably below the long-term average and the current forecast is for a drier than normal winter across most of the Basin.

Throughout 2010-11 resource updates will continue to be issued on the 1st and 15th of each month, or the first business day following that date.

For more information about conditions in the River Murray or wider Murray-Darling Basin visit www.mdba.gov.au/