



NEW SOUTH WALES

# MEDIA RELEASE

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**Ian Macdonald**

**Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy,  
Minister for Mineral Resources, Minister for State Development**

## **Sydney farmers turn to texting to save water**

A telephone SMS irrigation scheduling service using satellite information will be offered to landholders to help improve water use efficiency in the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment, Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald said today.

“This is the latest example of innovation being adopted by the Sydney Basin farming community to grow fresh fruit and vegetable including lettuce, cabbage, watermelon, cauliflower, sweet corn and zucchini,” Minister Macdonald said.

“Under the Hawkesbury Nepean River Recovery Project’s Water Smart Farms project, irrigators will receive a text message daily notifying how much water their own crop has used.

“They will also receive advice on how long to run their irrigation system to achieve optimum water productivity.

“Modern remote sensing technology allows scientists to measure in real time factors that can be used to determine irrigation requirements.

“Plant canopy size measured from satellite images regularly collected across the catchment will be used to calculate a specific water requirement for a crop.

“This information is then combined with data from four on-ground weather stations, including NSW Department of Primary Industries’ (DPI) demonstration vegetable farm at Richmond, to determine optimum crop water use.

“The text message will send suggested pump or irrigation run time based on the farmer’s individual irrigation system performance.”

Member for Londonderry Allan Shearan welcomed the initiative.

“I am pleased Western Sydney farmers can play their part in saving water,” Mr Shearan said.

“Sydney’s agriculture basin is a major producer of vegetables for our State, so I welcome any move which saves precious resources and makes this industry even more productive.”

Minister Macdonald said the service also allows irrigators to compare their water use against other irrigators using the internet.

“A prototype service has been tested over the past two years by a large group of grape growers in the NSW Riverina region.

“That work proved to be accurate and reliable, and is now being adapted to for use by irrigators in the Hawkesbury Nepean catchment.

“The right amount of water delivered to the crop at the right time is most critical, not only to save water and improve yield, but also for the best use of other inputs such as chemicals and fertilisers to enhance crop quality.”

NSW Department of Primary Industries, in partnership with CSIRO and the Co-operative Research Centre for Irrigation Futures, is implementing the service under the Office of the Hawkesbury Nepean.

The Hawkesbury-Nepean River Recovery Program is funded by the Australian Government through the Water for the Future program