



**9 May 2011**

**Extreme climate variability is the new normal**

*Australia's water leaders meet to discuss the sector's response to a dynamic climate*

References to the drought must become a thing of the past if we are to sufficiently plan and manage our water resources to achieve water security for the future. According to water leaders from across the country and overseas, Australia must prepare for a climate that is increasingly variable and uncertain.

The water leaders, including CEOs of some of Australia's largest water utilities, consulting and engineering firms, met in Adelaide today to discuss how the sector can best respond to the demands of a dynamic climate.

Tom Mollenkopf, CEO of the Australian Water Association (AWA), said: "There is an expectation that communities must 'get through the drought' and that heavy rainfall will follow a dry period. However, we must accept that our climate is increasingly uncertain. We must therefore take a sensible approach and plan and invest in water supply options to secure our water supplies for the future.

"There is a risk that with high rainfall and healthy dam levels in many states that water supply will no longer be considered an issue for many people. There is also a temptation to pull back funding from areas such as research, capital investment and maintenance."

But, according to Mollenkopf, activity in these critical areas cannot be turned on and off like a light switch.

"Our water needs – for communities, agriculture and the environment – are long term needs and they require long lead times and sound planning. A failure to continue to build resilience and security now will leave a sad legacy. Worse, if we lose our skilled people because projects are uncertain or shelved, we may not be able to recover."



The Water Leaders Forum was part of Ozwater'11 program. Organised by the Australian Water Association, Ozwater is Australia's largest conference and exhibition for water professionals.

**-ends-**

For further information or interview requests please contact Helen Ketton, AWA Communications Manager, on 02 9467 8416 / 0401 806 277

### **Notes to Editors**

- AWA is Australia's leading membership association for water professionals and organisations. Independent and not for profit AWA is the peak body supporting the Australian water sector in the delivery of effective and sustainable water management practices.