



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Monday 18 October 2010**

### **Water security still a concern for many Australians**

*-New research launched to coincide with National Water Week 2010 -*

Water security remains a concern for many Australians despite heavy rainfall and healthy dam levels in many states, according to new research released by the Australian Water Association (AWA) to coincide with National Water Week 2010.

Tom Mollenkopf, CEO of the Australian Water Association, said, “Whilst it is encouraging that three quarters of Australians still consider water to be an issue of concern, it is disconcerting that almost a quarter of Australians are not at all concerned about running out of water. Our urban water supplies may not be facing an immediate crisis in many states thanks to recent rain and new supply options but we cannot afford to get complacent on this issue. We must ensure that water security continues to be a priority for everyone.”

Although many Australians are prepared to reduce their water consumption and support water restrictions in order to protect Australia’s water supply the majority favour increasing our water supplies.

Interestingly, the preferred supply options highlighted by respondents were introducing treated stormwater to water supplies and building new dams over other options such as desalination. Over 75 per cent of respondents supported using treated stormwater.

When asked about desalination and other supply options such as recycled water, respondents said that they lacked information to make an informed decision about

these options. Fewer than one in five Australians believe that they are very informed about either treated recycled water or desalination water.

Despite support for increasing water supply options, only 20 per cent of people support increases in water prices to allow water suppliers to invest in water infrastructure to increase water supply in their region. Additionally, half of Australians have very strong opposition to price increases linked to scarcity and two-thirds oppose permanent price increases.

Tom Mollenkopf said, “This research raises questions about how much Australians value water and how much they are prepared to pay to secure supplies for the future. The research shows that people want an increase in water supply options but a large percentage is unwilling to pay for the necessary infrastructure.

“This represents some very clear challenges for the water sector. In addition to ensuring water issues remain top of mind for communities; we need to deliver the right water infrastructure for our regions and cities. Whilst we are fortunate in Australia to have a world class water industry we need to ensure we have the levels of investment necessary to meet future water needs.”

The research into attitudes towards water in the Australian community was launched to coincide with the start of National Water Week 2010. Held annually, National Water Week raises public awareness and improves understanding of water issues in Australia. It is the only event in Australia that provides a national focus for water.

### **Notes to Editors**

- The research was conducted by Ogilvy Illumination in September 2010. The research was carried out in two stages. Six focus groups were carried out in four cities across Australia – Adelaide, Brisbane, Bacchus Marsh and Orange and an online survey was conducted among 1,000 Australians aged 18 and over.
- National Water Week is coordinated by the Australian Water Association.
- The Australian Water Association (AWA) is Australia’s leading water sector body, representing over 10,000 water professionals around the country and across all water disciplines
- AWA provides leadership in the water sector on a wide range of issues, including skills shortages, climate change and water reuse and recycling.

- AWA works to enhance the skills and knowledge of water professionals and promote and disseminate best practice through an extensive range of technical seminars, courses and events.