



CONFERENCE 2006 **MEDIA RELEASE**
WATER FOR IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE & THE ENVIRONMENT
Finding a Flow for All

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**THINK LOCALLY, ACT REGIONALLY,
SAYS WATER RESEARCHER**

A senior Australian climate scientist has called for more regionally-based studies on how countries in the Australasian region can adapt to climate change.

“Projected climate change will exert considerable impacts on freshwater resources and its management in our region,” says the Director of CSIRO’s Climate Program, Dr Bryson Bates.

Dr Bates is addressing *Water for Irrigated Agriculture and the Environment: Finding a Flow For All*, the Crawford Fund’s development conference in Parliament House, Canberra today (16 August).

It will be opened at 9am by The Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, followed by the keynote address by Dr Frank Rijsberman, Director General of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), the world’s pre-eminent research institution on management of water for food and agriculture. A press conference will be held at 12pm. The Hon Malcolm Turnbull will make an address at 3.35pm.

“There are water shortages right now in Australia and as authorities respond with a range of mechanisms, the issue is already causing considerable concern in areas vulnerable to projected climate change,” Dr Bates says.

“As populations grow and shift in line with economic development there will be an impact on the balance between water availability and demand and ultimately water quality.”

He says that water managers in both the south west and south east of Australia are reviewing changes to rainfall in their regions and options for adapting to the drier conditions - particularly in the Murray-Darling Basin which produces 40 per cent of Australia’s agricultural production.

Scientists have begun scrutinising the region’s climate record in a \$7 million project - the South East Australia Climate Initiative.

The ATSE Crawford Fund wishes to thank the sponsors for this event, including:

Alliance of the CGIAR Centers; AusAID - the Australian Agency for International Development; Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research; Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage; CRC for Irrigation Futures; CSIRO Land and Water; CSIRO Livestock Industries; Grains Research and Development Corporation; International Water Management Institute; Land & Water Australia; Murray-Darling Basin Commission; National Water Commission

He says climate change is likely to result in: an intensification of the water cycle, with increased risk of floods and droughts; changes in the seasonality of river flows in regions where winter precipitation falls as snow; adverse changes to water quality and greater rates of soil erosion; and, increases in sea level, which will impair the quality of fresh water available from coastal aquifers and wetlands.

Projections of climate change are developed from an assessment of a range of computer simulations by global climate models including those produced by CSIRO.

Few studies have considered the feasibility and effectiveness of adaptation measures for specific water supply systems.

In Australia, projections have been developed for most States and several regions, including the Murray Darling Basin. Outside Australia, projections have been developed for the Yellow and Yangtze River systems in China and the Mekong River basin in Vietnam, as well as for many other regions.

Dr Bates said climate change research in the past decade had made significant advances but required substantial refinement to generate regional projections with a high level of confidence.

Further information, photos, additional press releases, the program, abstracts and bios are available at www.crawfordfund.org or by contacting Cathy Reade, Public Awareness Coordinator, Crawford Fund on 0413 575 934.