

MEDIA RELEASE

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Water Restrictions and the Future

Irrigation Australia Limited (IAL) cautiously welcomes the NSW Government's announcement of the lifting of Sydney's water restrictions and the introduction of Water Wise Rules, but also calls on the NSW Government to do more work to sustain outdoor urban water savings in the longer term.

Water restrictions have been in force in Sydney since 2003, including a prohibition on the use of sprinkler systems. Water restrictions have affected not just Sydney's community and their green space, but has also badly impacted the urban irrigation industry which is estimated to include 750 businesses and approximately 3,000 employees across NSW. The CEO of IAL, Mr Chris Bennett, says "urban irrigation businesses will welcome the lifting of the water restrictions".

However, Mr Bennett also cautioned that recent rains have not significantly improved water supply levels and emphasised that "in the face of continued population growth in Sydney and higher probability of dry spells from climate change, Sydney still needs on-going long term demand management programs to avoid water restrictions again in the near future."

"Outdoor urban water savings will only be sustained over time by the community having adequate knowledge of good watering practice and also using a well designed, installed, and maintained watering system". Mr Bennett says that "the permanent Water Wise Rules alone do not provide adequate guidance to the community about good watering practice."

Mr Bennett's concern is supported by Sydney Water's own *Water Conservation and Recycling Implementation Report 2007-08* which states that "had restrictions not been in place consumption would have been 378 litres per person per day". This consumption level exceeds the demand management targets imposed in Sydney Water's Operating Licence which requires it to meet a demand level of 329 litres per person per day by 2011.

The IAL is calling on the NSW Government to couple the introduction of the permanent Water Wise Rules with programs to encourage the community to invest in knowledge of good garden watering practice and to ensure irrigation equipment is installed and maintained in a proper and efficient condition. "The need for efficient garden watering practice is even more important now that water restrictions have been lifted."

"A well co-ordinated program to guide the community about good garden watering practice and proper design and management of garden watering systems will assist to offset likely increases in demand resulting from the lifting of water restrictions, and reduce the future need for the re-introduction of water restrictions."