

LET THE RIVERS RUN

A good flow on the way

By Peter Lamb

THE Darling River at Bourke, at 8m, is expected to rise to about 9 or 10m and deliver good flows into the Menindee Lakes storage downstream, according to river watchers.

Bourke Mayor Wayne O'Malley said yesterday there could be at least 300,000 megalitres of water that would go past before adding any contribution from the Warrego River downstream, which was also running.

"This is probably the best flow we've had here for about seven years," Cr O'Malley said.

"The river's been rising steadily and will get to 10m.

"That's about 6m above our weir, and there's more to come, with a flow of 34,000 megalitres a day coming from below the junction of the Macquarie and Barwon rivers.

"On top of that will be water from the Culgoa and Bogan rivers, which are also running.

"It's pretty good, and the weather patterns suggest we're having a change for the better.

"Let's hope this one-in-100-year-drought we're having is over."

Cr O'Malley said the flood water, a milky color, was healthy.

"It's only a little muddy and has very low salinity - very good water.

"It'll settle out as it goes downstream to Menindee."

He said a local saying was that if there was water in the major western rivers,

the Paroo and the Warrego, Bourke was in for a good season.

"If that's the case this year, the rain up here hasn't finished."

Bourke Shire works supervisor Phil Wilson said the muddy flood waters weren't a problem.

"It's a bit like fertilising your lawn when you're watering," he said.

Shire technical officer Jared Robinson said there was more water going past than he'd seen for a long time.

"And it looks like there's a fair bit more coming," he said.

"The mood of the whole town's changed. Nobody enjoys a drought."

Wentworth water broker firm Elstone said the flood waters could put up to 400,000 megalitres into the Menindee Lakes storage.

In comparison, the combined use of water over a "normal irrigation year" in the Red Cliffs, Merbein and First Mildura Irrigation Trust districts is about 120,000 megalitres.

"Today, there's 6000 megalitres a day going past Wilcannia and there's already water running into Menindee from an earlier rain," Mr Elstone said.

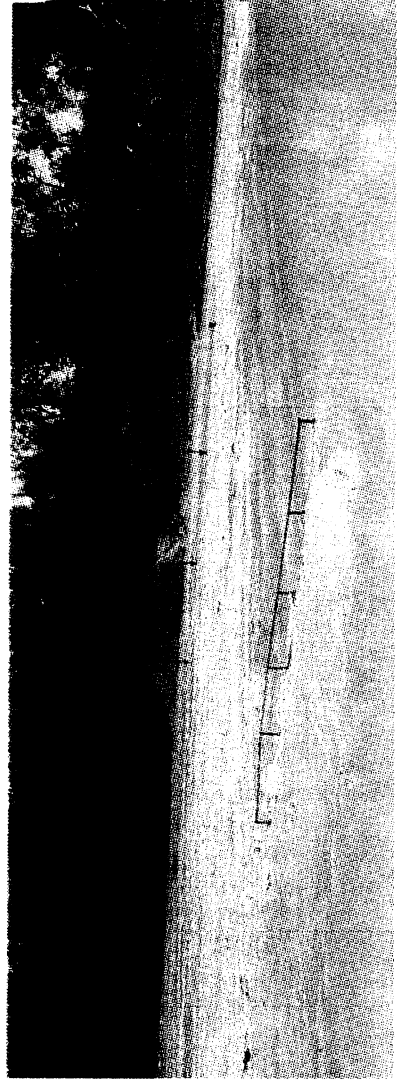
"All this water bodes well for the Wentworth weir pool and will help take the pressure off the Murray River storages.

"And there could be more because this is just the first three or four weeks into the wet season for the Darling catchment.

"The law of averages is there will be more rain up there."



FLOOD WATERS: Bourke Shire employees Damian Green and Ross Barnaby beside the Darling River.



OVERFLOWING: The Darling river is already about 6m above the Bourke weir, and there's more to come.