



CATTLE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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Water decisions should not paint an uncertain future for beef producers

The Cattle Council of Australia says that the Prime Minister's announcement that all water allocations, apart from that for human consumption, in the Murray-Darling Basin may cease as of July 1 2007 could potentially inflict unprecedented pressure on Australia's beef industry.

"The Cattle Council is working through the Prime Minister's announcement in detail and is taking a strong position that access to drinking water for stock is essential and must be protected," says President, Bill Bray.

"We recognise that the Murray-Darling Basin is in a desperate situation. Of course human requirements are of primary importance; however, we are wary of any approach that focuses on an immediate threat at the expense of cattle producers and the industry that they have built.

"The drought throughout southern Australia has already led to a crisis in feed supply and this must be urgently addressed as part of the water shortage response. We are hearing stories of cattle producers spending upwards of \$1 million on cattle feed. This cannot continue."

Next week the Cattle Council will meet with farmers in Victoria's Western District to discuss feed shortages, and to identify solutions and ideas for addressing the crisis.

"We believe that cattle producers should be involved in working through the solutions in such extreme situations, rather than losing all options for survival. We intend to fully engage all stakeholders and to present a range of practical solutions to the government."

"The worsening drought situation, and possible restrictions to stock water, is likely to force the hand of producers, leading to a large number of cattle being sold for slaughter and re-stocking throughout southern Australia."

Mr Bray says that the immediate affect is likely to be downward pressure on stock prices and that Australia's breeding herd may be depleted in the longer term.

"The worsening affect of the ongoing drought conditions cannot be underestimated. Cattle Council will lobby to ensure that the Government is aware of the importance of drinking water for stock and that a clear and concise set of options are constructed to address the feed shortage," concluded Mr Bray.

Ends – For further information contact Selena Jensen at Pegasus Communications on (03) 9329 7369 or 0400 626 782.

To register interest in Cattle Council's visit to Victoria on Thursday April 26 and Friday April 27 contact Selena Jensen at selena@pegasuscomms.com.au

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Cattle Council of Australia Incorporated (A2929)

PO Box E10 KINGSTON ACT 2604 Ph: 02 6273 3688 Fax: 02 6273 2397

E-mail: cca@cattlecouncil.com.au Web: www.cattlecouncil.com.au

