



## **MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**25 FEBRUARY 2004**

### **STATE GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE WINTER CLOUD SEEDING RESEARCH PROJECT FOR SNOWY MOUNTAINS**

The State Government today announced a plan to undertake a research project for winter cloud seeding in the Snowy Mountains to counter falling snow levels.

The research project aims to increase the amount of snow coverage in a defined area within the Kosciuszko National Park.

The extra snow will increase annual flows to the Murray River once it melts in the spring.

If successful, it would also address concerns about a shorter snow season.

NSW Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries said global warming is having a range of negative impacts on our environment.

“Our snow falls are shrinking and our droughts are hotter, longer and more frequent,” Mr Macdonald explained.

“Average temperatures in our alpine areas have been on a slow but steady rise since the early 1960s.

“These trends pose a very real threat to our communities, our economy and our environment

“Our ski operators, irrigators and electricity providers are all affected.

“Even some of our endangered animals, such as the Mountain Pygmy Possum which relies on a consistent snow cover to survive and breed, are under greater threat.

“Cloud seeding could help off-set an environmental tragedy in the making, without negatively affecting our environment.”

Mr Macdonald said the proposed research project will target a 1,000 km<sup>2</sup> area in the Kosciuszko National Park. Seeding will take place only in alpine areas (above 1400m elevation) and will exclude the Jagungal Wilderness area.

The closely controlled research project will be funded and administered by Snowy Hydro Limited, which would use the latest technology to more precisely target where the snow falls and measure outcomes.

Snowy Hydro will also be able to use the extra flows into the Murray River to help generate additional electricity.

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Cloud seeding involves discharging minute amounts of silver iodide into winter storm clouds to create more snow. An inert tracer agent will also be used to help measure and evaluate snow that is the direct result of cloud seeding.

“An 11-member expert panel assessed the research proposal and agreed the research project would not significantly impact the environment,” Mr Macdonald said.

“A preliminary assessment by the Department of Environment and Conservation also found that any adverse impacts on the environment would be minimal.

“In fact, the extra snow could provide real benefits to our rivers and the wildlife who depend on the alpine conditions.

“Cloud seeding has been successful in other parts of the world, namely Tasmania and parts of the United States.

“However, we recognize the alpine environment of the Snowy Mountains is unique.

“That’s why the proponents convened an panel of some of the best scientists on the issue and spent months consulting with a wide range of stakeholder groups.

“We must look at innovative ways to address the impacts of global warming on our communities, and this defined research project will help us do that.”

The State Government is expected to introduce special legislation shortly to enable the research project to proceed.

The legislation would have effect for five years, with the option to extend for one year. New legislation or a complete environmental assessment would be required at the end of the five-year period for any further cloud seeding activity to continue.

The project will be subject to close and ongoing monitoring. The Natural Resources Commission will monitor and assess the results from the research project and report to Government.

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