



New South Wales

MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

MEDIA RELEASE

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 7 A.M.,
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LEGISLATION FOR CLOUD SEEDING RESEARCH INTRODUCED TO STATE PARLIAMENT

The Carr Labor Government today will introduce special legislation into State Parliament that will enable a winter cloud seeding research project in the Snowy Mountains to move ahead.

“This research project is designed to increase snowfalls in a targeted area within the Kosciuszko National Park starting this winter,” said Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries, Ian Macdonald.

The proposed research project targets a 1,000 km² 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 *Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Bill 2004* only allows for this specific research project and only within the designated area of the Park,” Mr Macdonald said.

“It will 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 that period for any further cloud seeding activity to continue.”

According to Mr Macdonald, the goal of the research project is to help offset the impact that global warming is having on the unique alpine environment of the Snowy Mountains.

“Snow falls in the region have been decreasing an average of 1 per cent per year for the past 50 years,” Mr Macdonald said.

“This trend is having a very real impact on the Snowy region – especially the animal and plant species that depend on consistent snow cover for survival.

“The research project could produce up to 10 per cent more snow per season in the targeted areas.

“This will send an extra 70 GL of water – or the equivalent of 70,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools -- down the Murray River once the snow melts in the spring.

“These flows could also help improve local water storages, which are at critically low levels.

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“Under continuing dry weather patterns, Snowy Hydro estimates its water storages could drop to 36 per cent – the lowest level ever recorded – by 2007/2008.

“This special legislation provides a means for us to trial innovative technologies that could help off-set the impact of global warming on our alpine regions.”

Additional Details:

- The \$20 million research project will be funded entirely by Snowy Hydro Limited. Snowy Hydro will be able to use the extra flows into the Murray River to help generate renewable electricity.
- Seeding will occur using ground-based generators. These generators will create a stream of rising hot air, which will carry very small amounts of silver iodide and an inert tracing agent into winter storm clouds. The process will create no more noise than a backyard barbeque.
- An 11-member expert panel assessed the research proposal and agreed the project would not significantly impact the environment.
- A preliminary assessment by the Department of Environment and Conservation also found that any adverse impacts on the environment would be minimal.
- 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.
- The Minister for Infrastructure and Planning and the Minister for the Environment will be able to place conditions on the research project and stop it if there are any undesirable effects.

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