



MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

MEDIA RELEASE

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PROMISING EARLY RESULTS FROM CLOUD SEEDING TRIAL

The six-year cloud seeding research project in the Snowy Mountains has produced encouraging early results, the State Government announced today.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries, Ian Macdonald, said the second winter season of the cloud seeding would begin around June, after some small adjustments.

“This research project has always aimed to increase the amount of snow cover in a defined area of the Snowy Mountains region,” Mr Macdonald said.

“We want to test cloud seeding in this region, as a possible way of reversing the decline in snow levels, increasing water flow and boosting tourism.

“Global warming is putting pressure on our alpine biodiversity, endangered species, regional communities and local economies. Cloud seeding could help ease that pressure.

“As part of the conditions of this cloud seeding research, the independent Natural Resources Commission (NRC) has an on-going role in monitoring potential environmental impacts associated with the project.

“Early results from the environmental monitoring are now before the NRC for consideration. I look forward to receiving feedback from the NRC in the near future.

“In the meantime, I am reassured by the preliminary cloud seeding results. We believe samples taken from within the defined area during the first season show an increase in snow precipitation by an average of 25%.

“This is consistent with our original aim of increasing the snow coverage in targeted areas of the park by up to 10% each season.

“The next step is to overcome some initial hurdles in establishing how much water is generated by the snow when it melts in spring.

“We anticipate the extra snow from cloud seeding will deliver 70 gigalitres of water when the snow melts. This is equivalent to 70,000 Olympic sized swimming pools.

“However, it is believed that the drought may currently be affecting the water content of the snow. Snowdrifts and wind have also presented challenges in collecting this data.

“The signs are very strong that cloud seeding is generating additional run-off, but we need more scientific evidence.

“The cloud seeding research project is targeting a 1,000km² area in the Snowy Mountains Region, in alpine areas. It excludes the Jagungal Wilderness Area.

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“It involves the use of ground-based generators to send minute amounts of silver iodide into winter storm clouds. An inert tracer agent then helps to measure and evaluate the snow generated.

“The samples from the first year of the research project were independently evaluated by a research institute in the United States.

“The project is funded and administered by Snowy Hydro Limited, which intends to use the extra water flows to help generate additional renewable electricity.

“The six-year research project will continue to be monitored.”

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