

## **SNOWY RIVER ALLIANCE Inc.**

PO Box 622 Orbost, Victoria 3888 c/o PO Dalgety, NSW 2628  
<http://www.snowyriver.alliance.com.au/>

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### **Snowy Scientific Committee report on Snowy River flows is ‘damming’!**

The first Snowy Scientific Committee report is a damning indictment of the progress on environmental releases to the Snowy River and provides scientific grounds for decommissioning the Mowamba Aqueduct.

The Snowy Scientific Committee’s *Adequacy of Environmental Releases to the Snowy River* report was written in October 2008 but has still not been publicly released by the Minister or the NSW Department of Water and Energy despite promises to the contrary and despite the fact that according to Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997, the Snowy Scientific Committee is not subject to the control or direction of the Minister.

“The reasons for the delay are obvious,” said Mr John Gallard, Chair of Snowy River Alliance, “the NSW government does not want to hear what the Snowy Scientific Committee has to say on the state of the environment of the Snowy River and it doesn’t want the community to know the facts either.”

“Snowy River Alliance has obtained a copy of the Snowy Scientific Committee’s report and the report is damning. It is now evident that, in the seven years since corporatisation of the Snowy Hydro Scheme in 2002, progress on the return of legislated environmental flows and associated ecological objectives for the Snowy River has been abysmal.

As a matter of urgency, major increased flows must be released to the Snowy in the next 1-2 years and Mowamba Aqueduct decommissioned to permit the Mowamba River to flow into the Snowy,” said Mr Gallard.

“The volume of flows has not actually increased from the target volume of 38 gigalitres or 4% annual natural flow (ANF) from the first year after corporatisation in 2002, in fact it has gone backwards” said Louise Crisp Vice-Chair of Snowy River Alliance

“The volume of releases down the Snowy will have to increase dramatically if the Snowy increased flow target of 15% ANF is to be reached by 2009/10 and 21% by 2012.”

“The flow regime in terms of volume, seasonality and variability were all found to be inadequate to meet the ecological objectives of the legislation,” said Mr Gallard.

“Flows have been inadequate for habitat and channel maintenance and have not provided anything like normal conditions for stream fauna, but instead have maintained conditions more suited to exotic pest fish species.”

“To the detriment of river health, flow releases have not replicated the high spring snow melt flows which occurred pre-dam and instead have been flat-lined at a constant low level, especially since Mowamba Aqueduct was re-diverted back into Jindabyne dam in January 2006.”

“During summer the very low flows are resulting in absent or low levels of oxygen in the lower colder levels of water and reducing fish habitat. The situation of the Snowy is now so serious that if flows do not increase to at least 21% ANF the remaining deep pools in the upper Snowy are at risk of irreversible decline,” said Ms Crisp. “Most releases from Jindabyne dam have also been too

***The Snowy River must flow again.***

small to improve the thermal, oxygen and salt stratification that persists in the Snowy Estuary at Marlo. As well, sediment inflows following the 2003 fires, have been filling in pools. Major scouring flows are required to prevent increased consolidation of sediments. The Scientific Committee's report makes plain that sustained high flows must be delivered to the Snowy in the next 1-2 years."

"The report also indicates that institutional inflexibility regarding the delivery of the small volumes of water that have been released has compounded the lack of effective progress on the river," said Louise Crisp "Added to this has been the delay in converting savings identified by Water for Rivers into Environmental Entitlements and a lack of independent public data on Snowy entitlements and allocations and what water is actually released into the Snowy by Snowy Hydro Ltd at Jindabyne dam."

"The Snowy Scientific Committee report has identified that the Snowy River remains in a dire ecological condition," said John Gallard. "No wonder the NSW government is reluctant to release the report.

It is a matter of great urgency that increased and improved environmental flows are delivered into the Snowy, and that Mowamba Aqueduct is decommissioned. The Snowy Monitoring program must also be expanded and fully funded to support the vital independent work of the Scientific Committee."

#### **Media Contacts:**

John Gallard  
Chairperson  
Snowy River Alliance (NSW)  
Ph: 02 6456 2159  
E: [quartzcrystal@bigpond.com](mailto:quartzcrystal@bigpond.com)

Louise Crisp  
Vice-chair  
Snowy River Alliance (Vic)  
Ph : 03 51 530 156  
Mob : 0418 516 373  
E: [lcristp@bigpond.com](mailto:lcristp@bigpond.com)