MEDIA RELEASE

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CSIRO FORECASTS CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS FOR WESTERN CATCHMENT

A new CSIRO report summarising research into climate change and its possible impact on the Western Catchment points to increased variability for local communities, industries and ecosystems, according to the Chair of the Western Catchment Management Authority (WCMA), Rory Treweeke.

"The report's release is very timely as a free forum to discuss climate change in Western NSW will be held in Broken Hill on Thursday, August 16," Mr Treweeke said.

Copies of the report will be available at the forum or it can be downloaded from www.greenhouse.nsw.gov.au/climate_change_in_nsw/climate_change_in_nsw_links

"Land managers in the Western Catchment are used to great variability in both rainfall and temperatures," Mr Treweeke said.

"The CSIRO report indicates that this variability is likely to increase with an overall drying tendency over the next twenty to fifty years, coupled with an increase in average temperatures.

"The challenge is to be aware of how this will affect the grazing, dryland farming, irrigation industries, and the natural environment within which they operate, and to have appropriate management strategies in place," he said.

The Western Catchment is the largest in NSW, spanning approximately 230,000 km sq, and is unique in NSW because it encompasses a whole series of river systems, most of them seasonal, and includes the largest and most diverse areas of natural rangelands within NSW.

The CSIRO research into the Western Catchment was commissioned by the NSW Government in order to gain a clearer picture of potential future impacts on the State's key catchment areas.

Key findings of the CSIRO Regional study include:

- Since 1950, the Western Catchment has experienced warming of around 1.3 degrees;
- Projections suggest increases in evaporation, heat waves, extreme winds and fire risk, as well as potential for seasonal increases in extreme rainfall events;
- Changes in rainfall and higher evaporation rates are likely to lead to less water for streams and rivers in the Western catchment, which will have downstream consequences for storages and place strains on the catchment's water resources;
- Decreases in runoff due to climate change may reduce the extent and function of the catchment's freshwater wetlands, such as the internationally recognised Lake Pinaroo and the Narran Lake Nature Reserve;
- Climate change is likely to heighten the need for conservation efforts to protect the catchment's 125 species, two populations, and six ecological communities that are classified as endangered or threatened; and

- A modest level of warming may threaten the catchment's characteristic woodlands, currently listed as endangered, including the Nelia, Coolibah-Black Box, Myall and Brigalow-Gidgee woodlands.

"The CSIRO found that the catchment faces serious challenges into the future, due to likely accelerating climate change. It is important that we understand what to expect from climate change. I would encourage local people to read the report and attend the forum," Mr Treweeke said.

The forum is hosted by the Western and Lower Murray-Darling CMAs and the Department of Primary Industries. More information on the forum is available at www.western.nsw.gov.au Interested people are asked to register by August 14.

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Caption: Western CMA staffer, Katrina Hannigan, with the newly released report.