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**Innovative monitoring program earns \$7.8 million national water grant
for Hydro Tasmania Consulting**

Hydro Tasmania Consulting, in partnership with the State Department of Primary Industries and Water (DPIW), has received a grant for \$7.8 million for a project that stands to revolutionise water monitoring.

The grant is from the Australian Government's Water Smart Australia program, part of the Australian Government Water Fund, and involves the use of an innovative system developed by Hydro Tasmania Consulting.

In recent years, Tasmania's agricultural production has seen significant growth which directly relates to water development and the expansion of irrigated cropping and the dairy industry. The amount of water allocated statewide has more than doubled between 1996 and 2005.

Hydro Tasmania Consulting Group Manager Sustainable Resources and Energy, Mr Christoff LeGrange, said the program aims to link existing research and extension programs to provide substantial gains in water use efficiency and provide positive environmental outcomes.

"At a time when we are focussing on climate change and the subsequent scarcity of water, this project will add considerable value to the Tasmanian community," Mr LeGrange said.

"The Tasmanian Water Use Management Project is a statewide project which will primarily focus on the collection and management of water use data.

"This will be achieved using an innovative telemetry system called Ajenti, which has been developed by Hydro Tasmania Consulting.

"We see this innovative program becoming an important element in effectively managing water use in Tasmania and it is likely to have even wider application."

As a signatory to the National Water Initiative, Tasmania is committed to ensure that all major water use in the State is metered. By the end of 2008 as a result of this program, around 3500 meters will be installed on all commercial water takes.

"The main benefit of the system is that it will facilitate improved water management practices and efficiencies as well as being able to manage data at significantly lower cost than the manual method currently in use," Mr LeGrange said.

"Access to the data will also provide irrigators with significant potential benefits in managing their on-farm water use."

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The Ajenti Telemetry System collects individual water meter data and transmits the data via SMS to a central data management base. This information is then made available through a website to DPIW and its licensees.

The information will be used to better monitor water usage and result in more efficient use of water, along with much lower costs in collecting data.

The system will also provide a more transparent and comprehensive water management and resource planning processes which will lead to significant economic and, environmental and social benefits.

The project cost is \$18.6 million and will start this year and be completed in 2010.

The grant was officially announced by the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, in Devonport earlier today.

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