



## MEDIA RELEASE

### ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

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#### EPA encourages residents to learn where their water will come from in the dry year ahead

The Environment Protection Authority's Mount Lofty Ranges Watershed Protection Office (WPO) is encouraging Adelaide residents to learn where their drinking water comes from as South Australia endures one of the driest years on record.

The Mount Lofty Ranges watershed is a 1640 square kilometer water catchment area that extends from Williamstown in the north to Myponga in the south.

Manager of the WPO Rachel Barratt said the watershed provided 60 per cent of Adelaide's drinking water in an average year and is home to about 50,000 residents.

"While the majority of South Australians understand how important it is to protect Australia's largest waterway – the River Murray, the importance of the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed seems to be less well understood among metropolitan residents," Ms Barratt said.

Significantly more water is taken from the watershed than the River Murray, in an average year. Approximately 137,000 megalitres (ML) are taken from the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed, and 88,000 ML is taken from the River Murray.

In a dry year the River Murray still does not supply all of Adelaide's water requirements alone and the water it does supply travels to reservoirs through the rivers and streams of the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed.

"Adelaide residents should be aware of the resource in the Mount Lofty Ranges and that ongoing efforts are made to ensure it continues to provide quality water supplies through the EPA's Watershed Protection Office," Ms Barratt said.

"When you turn on your tap, try to remember that the water has come from rivers and streams in the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed."

The proliferation of built-up residential townships and farming land within the watershed highlights its uniqueness when compared to most major Australian watersheds, which are usually located away from metropolitan cities and consist primarily of pristine vegetation.

In Melbourne, the major watersheds are 'closed' catchments where only 10 per cent is used for human activities.

In contrast, Ms Barratt said Adelaide's Mount Lofty Ranges watershed was mostly 'open' to a diverse range of land uses.

"In fact more than 90 per cent of the watershed is used for human activities," she said.

Ongoing efforts are being made to protect and improve the water in the watershed. With assistance from the WPO, farmers are fencing off watercourses and removing stock, residents are upgrading septic tanks and local businesses and industries are improving practices to prevent and minimize pollution.

“The EPA’s Watershed Protection Office encourages all Adelaide residents to learn about where their water comes from and support those in the hills caring for this resource. With an increased understanding about the importance of the Mount Lofty Ranges watershed we can all as a community continue to rely confidently on this vital resource, as well as the River Murray,” Ms Barratt said.

For more information visit [www.epa.sa.gov.au/watershed.html](http://www.epa.sa.gov.au/watershed.html)

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