

2009 MDBA International River Health Conference **REGISTRATIONS FILLING QUICKLY**

The 2009 International River Health Conference will take place from Sunday October 18 to Tuesday October 20. The Conference considers all environmental issues from anywhere in Australia i.e. it is not just about rivers and the Murray-Darling Basin.

Registrations are now open via www.onelifeoneworldourfuture.com where you can reserve your student and teacher places.

Over 650 students and teachers representing every Australian State and Territory will converge in Canberra to discuss global warming, river health, catchment management, coastal and marine issues, waste management, cultural heritage and a myriad of other natural resource management topics. There will be celebrity guests, high profile politicians, exciting workshops and a chance to meet like-minded students from Australia and the world.

Places for the 2009 International River Health Conference are very limited and only 150 student and teacher places have been allocated to Canberra as the host city, with 60 student and teacher places for each State and Territory.

With drought, river health and management of our natural resources reaching crisis point, the Conference will take on special significance. It is common knowledge that the Murray-Darling Basin, Australia's biggest food bowl, may run out of water as early as next year if autumn rains don't arrive. It is an opportunity to witness how tomorrow's leaders are feeling about the situation and what they believe can be done to secure a bright future for all Australians.

This is the biggest fight of our life. On a weekly basis farmers are walking off the land as the only way out because crops are failing as the drought worsens. It really is heartbreaking stuff and shows that this is no longer just an environmental issue; it is a social issue of the highest order. We need our kids to feel that they can make an impact on the problems we all face.

The International River Health Conference provides hands-on, student-centred learning to bring about a cultural change in the way we perceive our natural environment, and to raise awareness of the importance of environment education, and the value of the "Kids Teaching Kids" model of education. Students come away from the event with skills in acting on their concerns for the environment, more knowledge about environmental issues and how other communities are dealing with those concerns, but more importantly, students build resilience and optimism, develop a sense of future, and realise their capability as public speakers.

The River Health Program has also included many State Conferences running for 2 days and catering for over 300 students and teachers, held in places such as Canberra, Wagga Wagga, Broken Hill, Toowoomba, Narrabri, Adelaide and Bendigo; a workshop manager travelling to every Australian Capital City to present on the kids teaching kids concept and ensure schools from each of these cities attend and present at the Conference; and the direct involvement of 500 schools and 3000 students and teachers Australia-wide.

This Program is about making education relevant, providing regional access throughout Australia via smaller forums and it is about giving environmental education a home. Ultimately, it is about protecting and enhancing our precious water resources through education and involvement.

The MDBA International River Health Conference is proudly supported by the Murray Darling Basin Authority; Australia Post Questacon; ACT Government; eWater CRC; Landcare Australia Limited; and the National Capital Educational Tourism Project.

I look forward to seeing you at the 2009 International River Health Conference.