

Causes

El Niño

- Australia becomes drier as rainfall decreases
- Trade winds that bring warm water weaken, cooling the air and reducing rainfall
- Eastern Australia gets hotter and drier
- Low and irregular rainfall

Over Use

- Driest inhabited continent
- Although only 23million people, due to lack of water this is over populated
- 2 million people live on the Murray River
- Murray River provides water for agriculture in the region
- 40% of agriculture and 70% irrigated crops and pasture

Responses

Farmers

- Received \$1.7m a day in drought relief from the government
- \$400 - \$600 per fortnight each
- More efficient irrigation systems

Sustainable

- Subsidising rainwater storage for homes
- Recycle waste water from showers, sinks and washing machines
- New desalination plant in Sydney

Government

- Legislation to ban car washing and limit showers
- States urged to hand the responsibility for the Murray river to the central government
- States could only use a sustainable amount of water (calculated by scientists)
 - States can trade their water allowances



The Big Dry

Drought caused by El Niño
2002 - 2009

Consequences

Social

- People in rural areas had a lack of water
 - This put pressure on city populations
- Rural suicide rates rose

Economic

- Water bills rose 20% in 2008
- Agriculture was severely impacted
 - Farmers had to sell cattle as they could not afford to feed them
 - Food prices rose as they had to import
 - Dairy farm number halved
 - 10 000 employed in cotton industry impacted

- Tourism was negatively impacted

Environmental

- Grassland turned to scrubland
- Energy from HEP was reduced so more fossil fuels used
- Water quality reduced as toxic algal outbreaks in the depleted rivers, dams and lakes
- Loss of vegetation, wildlife and biodiversity
 - Soil erosion as it dried out and was blown away

