

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Murray Darling Basin Plan must do more to secure future of NSW catchments

The Murray Darling Basin Plan must be strengthened for any real chance of returning NSW's precious wetlands, streams and rivers to good health, according to the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and Inland Rivers Network.

The *Guide to the proposed Basin Plan* found an additional 7600GL per year must be returned to the environment to restore health to all catchments in the Murray Darling Basin. Yet recent discussions have centered around returning 4000GL or as little as 3000GL a year of water for the environment.

Half of all the Murray Darling Basin catchments located in NSW are in poor condition and even an additional 4000GL of water will leave two of them deprived of the essential flows needed for good health<sup>1</sup>.

"You can't do deals over what nature needs to survive. If over extraction continues, water allocation will become a dry argument with little left for the environment, industry or communities dependent on the river," Nature Conservation Council of NSW Chief Executive Officer, Pepe Clarke, said.

"Trade offs and concessions on the amount of water returned to the environment will severely compromise the opportunity to restore our once-great river system to good health.

"The lower end of the range of additional water needed for the environment would leave up to one-third of NSW catchments in poor condition. This is not a compromise, it is signing the death warrant for some of the state's most valuable aquatic habitats and the birds, fish and wildlife that call them home," Mr Clarke said.

"Even the highest volume of water currently proposed by the Authority for the environment (4000GL per year) returns only three additional NSW catchments to good condition, leaving natural wonders such as the internationally significant Gwydir wetlands at risk," Inland Rivers Network President, Anne Reeves, said.

"These Ramsar wetlands are critical breeding and feeding habitat for colonial waterbirds, with up to 500,000 birds recorded feeding in the wider wetlands when floods occur.

"The Murray Darling Basin Plan will not succeed in its ambition of creating a sustainable river system unless the life-giving water that NSW's catchments so desperately need are restored" Ms Reeves said.

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<sup>1</sup> Table 1: Environmental flow outcomes for NSW's Murray Darling Basin catchments. Compiled by Inland Rivers Network from Figures 6.6 and 8.3 of the *Guide to the proposed Basin Plan*.