



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Murray Darling proposal will not reverse 100 years of over extraction

The Inland Rivers Network (IRN) and Nature Conservation Council of NSW strongly reject the proposed Draft Basin Plan leaked to the media today.

The impacts of excessive water extraction on wetlands, River Red Gum forests, native fish, floodplain graziers, tourists and health of regional communities will not be reversed by unambitious water cuts that do not reflect what science tells us will return the river system to health.

The National Water Commissioner, in conjunction with the latest report on National Water Initiative progress, stated that "Governments have not yet met their commitments to give rivers and wetlands a fair share of water."

"There is a lot of lost ground to be recovered if the balance between water use and a healthy river environment is to be restored," said Bev Smiles, president of IRN.

"The high variability of our river systems and weather patterns must be considered. The economies of inland towns should not be dependent solely on access to excessive volumes of water from our struggling rivers and groundwater systems."

"The Basin Plan is a once in a life time opportunity to redress the imbalance of water use in the Murray Darling Basin that has occurred over generations."

IRN and the Nature Conservation Council are strongly advocating for the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to maintain 4,000GL as the appropriate minimum volume to be returned to the river system to achieve a sustainable diversion limit in the Basin Plan.

"The Federal government has committed around \$10 billion to achieving an environmentally sustainable Basin. The broader Australian community wants this investment to provide a positive long-term outcome for river health.

"Currently available independently peer reviewed published science indicates the minimum volumes to be returned to the river, if we are to achieve a healthy working river, are in the order of 4,000GL.

"Our rivers are our lifeblood. We've taken too much water out of the Murray-Darling for far too long. It's time to get it right with water," Ms Smiles said.

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