



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **The Condamine Balonne test: Is the Federal Government serious about tackling the water crisis?**

Conservationists have urged the Federal Government to amend the Condamine Balonne water plan and not to lock in unsustainable levels of water extraction from the vulnerable river system.

The Inland Rivers Network (IRN) today delivered its submission on the final water plan for the Condamine Balonne system and challenged the Federal Government to make good on the promise to tackle 'head on' over-allocation in the Murray Darling Basin.

As the plan currently stands big water users like Cubbie Station would be allowed to continue taking massive amounts of water away from internationally important wetlands and the Darling River.

"This is a big test for the Federal Government to see whether it is genuine about fixing the water crisis," said IRN coordinator Amy Hankinson.

"It would be totally irresponsible of the Federal Government to let this plan go through, knowing that the taxpayer will eventually have to mop up the mess."

The recent State of the Darling Report confirmed flows to the internationally recognised Narran Lakes and to the chronically over-allocated Darling River have been cut by more than 50 per cent.

"Landholders and wildlife on the floodplain and in the Narran Lakes wait a very long time between drinks because the only water that reaches them now is from rare floods," said Australian Conservation Foundation healthy rivers campaigner Dr Arlene Buchan.

"And climate change means less water is entering the basin than used to be the case."

The groups said if the plan was approved 'as is' the Government would sign off on:

- Single licences that are almost as big as the first step of the Living Murray (around 470 billion litres)
- Continued fast and furious development – on farm water storage is 19 times the capacity it was in 1988
- The loss of more than half the water in the system – and far more in some years – leaving the Darling, the environment and other farmers in dire straits.

"The current process needs to be halted and an independent assessment of the impacts of the plan conducted – there has not been a single environmental impact assessment to date on the plan or any of the licences issued," Ms Hankinson said.

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