

MEDIA RELEASE

Gwydir wetlands hung out to die

Conservationists and floodplain graziers have welcomed recognition by the Senate that our most important wetlands are under threat, and have called on the NSW and federal governments to honour commitments to protect internationally significant wetlands in the state's north.

The calls follow the announcement of plans for yet another huge off-river storage dam, which will mean less water getting to wetlands and other landholders in the Gwydir valley.

"The Senate will also need to recognize that floodplain development is having a huge impact on many of these wetlands, bleeding them dry. Action to rescue wetlands such as the Gwydir wetlands must begin with stopping new development and fixing what is there," said IRN Coordinator Amy Hankinson.

"Only a fraction of the Gwydir wetlands remain and what is left is parched and almost lifeless."

Ms Hankinson said the proposed new dam would be built on land believed to have been illegally cleared a few years ago.

She said the proposal was being promoted as a 'flood control' measure, allowing it to avoid the proper Environmental Impact Assessment, despite clearly being a storage dam.

"There is absolutely no doubt this proposal will impact on the Ramsar-listed Gwydir wetlands just a few kilometres downstream. This should trigger the Commonwealth EPBC Act."

"The Commonwealth must live up to its international obligations and intervene to demonstrate the EPBC Act is worth the paper it is written on".

"NSW also needs to show it is serious about protecting our rivers and wetlands, as well as those people who live on them, and put a stop to these new developments," Ms Hankinson said.

"The NSW Government has publicly committed to reducing water use in the Gwydir because it's common knowledge there isn't enough to go around. And that's before the drought is taken into account".

"I am astonished this proposal is being seriously considered – it will take more water from the system, with negative impacts on farmers, landholders and the environment," said local landholder Bryce Woods.

"We are in the worst drought in history and are suffering from the legacy of decades of over-extraction from our rivers and the new challenges climate change presents – how can we justify building dams that will take more water from the system?"

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