

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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**ATTENTION: News Editors, Political, Resource and Environment Reporters**

### **Commonwealth must match NSW water buy-back**

Environment groups today applauded the lemma Government's pledge of \$105 million to buy much-needed water from willing sellers to save stressed wetlands and waterways.

The Australian Conservation Foundation and the Inland Rivers Network said New South Wales had stepped up the pace of water recovery across the Murray-Darling Basin and called on the Federal Government to match the funding.

ACF Healthy Rivers Campaigner, Dr Arlene Buchan, said: "This is the first time a government has entered the water market on behalf of the natural environment and future generations in such a big way. The Premier's pledge is a watershed in natural resource management."

Dr Buchan said purchasing water from willing sellers was consistent with water recovery methods in the Federal Government's National Water Initiative, which has the support of leading environmental and farmer groups.

"Buying water on the market is the quickest way to return water to rivers, it's the most responsible use of taxpayers' money and it's the fairest deal for farmers."

IRN Coordinator, Amy Hankinson, said the move set a new standard, and had implications for the stressed River Murray. "South Australia has been calling on other states to enter the market and buy water for the Murray. If they don't, water recovery targets in the Living Murray agreement will not be reached.

"The recent mass spawning of native fish like the silver perch and golden perch in Barmah-Millewa forest on the Murray River shows that a lot can be achieved through well managed environmental water.

"Endangered native birds like the straw necked ibis have been breeding in the Low Murrumbidgee wetlands and a tributary of the Lachlan River after these areas had the benefit of recent environmental flows."

ACF understands the NSW Department of Environment & Conservation has already received phone calls from farmers who want to sell their water licences for the environment.

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