

Media Release

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**Australian Conservation Foundation
Inland Rivers Network
Nature Conservation Council New South Wales**

Bird deaths demand public inquiry

The Inland Rivers Network (IRN), Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales (NCC) and Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) today called on the NSW Government to conduct a public inquiry into the cause of a failed bird breeding event in the Gwydir wetlands.

The Gwydir wetlands are under so much stress from over extraction of water and drought that successful bird breeding now requires the assistance of the NSW government. In early January this year, Government authorities were warned that at least 200 megalitres of water per day was needed in the wetlands to support the breeding cycle of 4000 straw-necked ibis.

Authorities released just 75 megalitres a day and as a direct result thousands of ibis abandoned their unhatched eggs.

Inland Rivers Network Coordinator Brendan Fletcher said, "Water was available to support this breeding event, but it just wasn't delivered to the birds. Thousands of ibis eggs were abandoned unhatched. This is a real shame and it was completely avoidable."

Dr Arlene Buchan, Healthy Rivers Campaigner for the Australian Conservation Foundation said, "Australia's wetland birds are being hammered by loss of their wetland habitat through over-extraction of water for irrigation and drought. The NSW government's water sharing plans are intended to prevent further declines in bird species. The plans failed and we are entitled to ask why."

Rachael Young from NCC said, "This was a significant bird breeding event. Because of environmental degradation and drought there has not been a successful breeding event in the Gwydir for 4 years. Loss of suitable breeding conditions in many of Australia's wetlands mean that the long term outlook for these and other waterbirds is grim."

The groups have written to the NSW Premier asking for a full public inquiry and requesting a full account of the actions of the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) in respect of this event.

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