

Media Release

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**Nature Conservation Council of NSW
Total Environment Centre
Inland Rivers Network**

Call for Fair Dinkum Effort from Water Ministers

Environmentalists today put forward a fair dinkum and balanced plan to deliver environmental flows for rivers in the next ten years. The plan builds on critical Federal and State negotiations to be finalized in the next two weeks.

"We are seeking a 10% increase in environmental water delivered to stressed rivers over the next 10 years, with government compensating irrigators for about a third. The industry should bear the remainder (6.5%) as it will be receiving a big financial gain from perpetual property rights over the same period. We will be pressing very hard for the NSW Natural Resources Minister Craig Knowles to make this the NSW Government position," said Jeff Angel, Executive Director of Total Environment Centre.

"It is important to realize that in NSW the Government is handing over virtual water property rights from July 1, 2004. This is a windfall gain for individual farm assets that must be balanced by environmental gains at the same time. We will not accept a decade delay for additional environmental flows into the rivers, as some have argued."

Rachael Young, Water Policy Officer for the NSW Nature Conservation Council said: "At each step of the water negotiations since 1994, private property rights over water have made huge strides, with the environment being left behind. At this critical window of state and federal negotiations, this must stop. The Carr Government should not sign up to a mediocre result from the COAG process."

Brendan Fletcher, Inland Rivers Network Coordinator said: "The NSW water plans that will take effect for 10 years are completely inadequate. They will not deliver healthy rivers and need to be overhauled. COAG originally called for healthy rivers by 2005. Action now can save our rivers."

"We note the threat by the National Farmers Federation to walk away from the process if they don't get what they want. But this is simply an attempt to put political pressure on the Federal Government. Bully boy tactics do not impress the community and it certainly displays a lack of regard for the health of our rivers," Mr Angel said.

Our plan calls for: 7% increase in environmental water (above the small amounts currently planned) delivered to stressed rivers between 2007 and 2013; Government pays for half of this 7% allocation; Another 3% delivered in the first year (2014-15) after the water plans expire; Another 10% should be delivered over the following ten years.

This plan allows a ramp up from 2004 and recognizes the dire state of many rivers. It also ensures action during the next electoral terms of the NSW and Commonwealth Governments, rather than being put off into the never- never.

Further information:

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