



Media Release

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More evidence that the Nationals can't be trusted to manage natural resources

Premier Berejiklian must remove National Party MPs from natural resource portfolios after it was revealed that Nationals Ministers have tried to push through changes to water-sharing plans that would benefit big party donors. [1]

The revelations in today's *Daily Telegraph* come after *Four Corners* last month found big irrigators at the top of the Barwon-Darling river system had syphoned off billions of litres of water illegally.

"It appears the National Party has been working hand-in-glove with the big irrigators to cook the rules, and the Darling and environmental water have been the casualties," said **Inland Rivers Network spokesperson Bev Smiles**.

"The *Four Corners* report showed the government turning a blind eye to illegal behavior like meter tampering and water theft.

"Now the *Daily Telegraph* article shows National Party Ministers have been doing the bidding of irrigators and attempting to rewrite water-sharing rules to benefit major donors.

"The National Party has overseen possibly the biggest theft of water in the state's history. The party has been captured by big agribusiness irrigators and donors who are putting their commercial interests ahead of the environment and downstream users.

"We need a Royal Commission or judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of this whole murky business."

The *Telegraph* reported Environment Minister Gabriel Upton, who under current arrangements must agree to changes to water sharing plans, had been resisting pressure from Nationals Ministers.

Conservation Council Campaigns Director Daisy Barham said: "We applaud Ms Upton for standing up to the National Party on this important matter and urge Premier Gladys Berejiklian to ensure the Environment Minister retains the right to veto changes to water-sharing plans.

"The river belong to everyone, not just big irrigators, and water-sharing plans must ensure the environment and other users get their fair share, including floodplain graziers, downstream communities and Aboriginal communities."