



Media Release

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There is no Plan B: NSW must stay the course and save the Murray-Darling Basin Plan

Premier Gladys Berejiklian should take the water portfolio from the Nationals and recommit to implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on time and in full.

Regional Water Minister Niall Blair has taken the extraordinary step of ordering his department to start withdrawing NSW from the plan.

“The NSW Nationals have proven time and again they are unable to manage water for NSW,” Nature Conservation Council CEO Kate Smolski said.

“By their reckless actions and mismanagement, as revealed by ABC’s Four Corners, the Nationals are jeopardising the ecological health of our river systems, the livelihoods of river communities, and decades of complex planning and negotiation.

“After this latest stunt of threatening to walk away from the basin plan, Premier Gladys Berejiklian must appoint a reasonable Liberal MP to the water portfolio, and recommit to implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on time and in full. There is no Plan B for restoring the Murray-Darling to health, and action is required now.

“NSW has incredible rivers and wetlands thanks to the water that flows through the Murray-Darling Basin. The Basin Plan is the best chance we have to throw a lifeline to the struggling river. The NSW Government threat to walk away to appease some big agribusiness lobbyists is a national shame.”

Mr Blair’s move to withdraw NSW from the plan followed the Senate vote last night to disallow measures that would have stripped 70 gigalitres from Northern Basin rivers and wetlands and give it to irrigators.

NSW Nature Conservation Council and Inland Rivers Network applaud this Senate decision because it protects water recovery aimed at saving the Darling River, its dependent communities and significant wetlands in the Northern Basin.

Inland Rivers Network spokesperson Bev Smiles said: “Retaining those 70 gigalitres for the environment will give important wetlands such as the Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir Wetlands and their waterbirds a fighting chance.

“These gems are internationally significant but have suffered terribly over the past few decades as water extraction has increased and rainfall has declined. The disallowance of the Northern Basin amendment has been the best outcome for the environment and communities.”

Federal Government must step in to implement the Murray Darling Basin on time and in full if NSW follows through on its threat to withdraw from the [Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council](#).

Media contact: James Tremain, 0419 272 254