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MEDIA RELEASE  
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## **Water rorts to be entrenched**

Inland Rivers Network has slammed the NSW Government initial approach to licencing the previously illegal capture of flood flows into private farm dams in north-west NSW. The proposal is to grant a new, free, tradable property right to irrigators, with almost unlimited permission to capture flood water.

A submission to the proposed licencing and management of flood water capture (known as Floodplain Harvesting) in the NSW Border Rivers valley has highlighted ongoing favouritism to the irrigation industry at the expense of river health and downstream communities in a highly variable river system.

'The Darling River gets all its water from its tributaries, and the Border Rivers catchment is a major source,' said Brian Stevens, Secretary of Inland Rivers Network.

'The proposed approach of capturing flood flows for private gain in the Border Rivers will rob water from downstream communities, destroy important cultural heritage values, and effectively kill native fish and the river communities all the way to Menindee Lakes.'

'Proposed rules to grant an initial 500% of new licence allocations and to allow 500% carryover will result in capture of all small and medium sized floods and severely reduce the downstream benefits of large floods.'

The fact that NSW Government water agencies are making an attempt to regulate Floodplain Harvesting should be congratulated but this particular approach mirrors the harsh criticism handed down by the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) on Friday 27 November.

'ICAC highlighted the undue focus on irrigators' interests within water agencies and the lack of transparency, balance and fairness in consultation processes.'

'This is exactly what has happened with the assessment of volumes and rules for new Floodplain Harvesting licences - windfall private property rights for an elite set of irrigators.'

'New proposed rules will mean business as usual with limited change to flood access and new exemptions for capture of rainfall runoff. Our northern inland rivers will continue to suffer.'

Inland Rivers Network maintains that the health of the Border and Darling Rivers will not improve with the proposed regulation of Floodplain Harvesting in the Border Rivers. This is the first cab off the rank with rules for the other four catchments, Gwydir, Namoi, Macquarie and Barwon-Darling due out early next year.

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