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MEDIA RELEASE

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Wealthy irrigators to be gifted water taken from downstream communities

Inland Rivers Network condemns new Water Minister Kevin Anderson and the NSW Government for moving closer to granting valuable floodplain harvesting licences, starting with the Gwydir and Border River Valleys, without any regard to the viability of downstream communities and river health.

The issuing of floodplain harvesting licences should be held off until a rigorous environmental, cultural and social assessment of downstream impacts is undertaken and fully understood.

Spokesperson for Inland Rivers Network, Brian Stevens:

‘NSW is one step closer to legalising floodplain harvesting without conducting any comprehensive assessment of the impacts of this water capture. Floodplain water flows should provide water for the Barwon-Darling/Baaka River, for wetland systems, for Aboriginal cultural values and for groundwater recharge.’

‘Downstream communities are being sacrificed by the NSW Government in favour of their wealthy irrigator supporters who have had free unlicensed access to floodplain flows for over 30 years. They are now to be gifted large water entitlements worth many millions of dollars.’

‘Inland Rivers Network agrees that regulation of floodplain water extraction is long overdue, but the NSW Government is planning to issue licences for a large volume of floodplain harvesting based mainly on information provided by the irrigators themselves. Without a comprehensive assessment of downstream impacts, this regulatory process is locking in the ongoing degradation of the NSW Northern Basin rivers and communities.’

‘The call for rigorous impact assessment of floodplain works and flood extraction has been loud and clear across many stakeholder groups in the Murray-Darling Basin but the NSW Government chooses to ignore a fair and just approach to water management in the state.’

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