



**Healthy Rivers Dubbo**

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## **Media Release**

### **Playing favourites on the floodplains**

Floodplain harvesters' use levee banks to divert water that either falls as rain or breaks out of the river bank during floods into private dams. It has been an unmeasured form of free water collection, believed to have increased since 1994 by almost two and a half times.

Floodplain harvesting has contributed to dehydrated floodplains and wetlands, less resilient rivers and depleted aquifers. It has contributed to the rapid decline in size and health of the Ramsar listed Macquarie Marshes, and has been identified in several reports as a key contributor to the mass fish kills in the Lower Darling in 2019.

The NSW Government have been touting that by licencing the controversial practice, they are bringing water take back in line with the Cap Limit on extraction set in 1994, and returning some critically important flood flows to the ailing river systems of the west.

However the Macquarie will be missing out on seeing any water returned to the valley, as the NSW Government - keeping true to their form of prioritising irrigation over everyone else – have increased the Cap Limit, and are claiming that floodplain harvesting can remain at current levels.

It is stated that the volume of the individual entitlements that have been arrived at is significantly inaccurate, and yet NSW still want to allow users to take five times their licence volume when a flood comes and gift them five times the water on their licence to get started. On top of that when the significantly inaccurate licence volumes are corrected, compensation will be paid.

### **Quotes attributable to Mel Gray, Convenor of Healthy Rivers Dubbo**

“It is bewildering that the Government can wave a magic wand and claim less water is being taken now than in 1994, when we can see the wetlands, rivers and fish dying in front of our eyes.

“You would think the government would use the best available science and actual real life data to work out the volumes of these new licences seeing so much is at stake, but the modelling they used is rubbish.

“Despite having since 2008 to collect real data, the NSW Government have instead used secretive models to come with some rubbery numbers to convert into big, valuable, tradable, mortgageable compensable floodplain harvesting licences.

“We are being ripped of momentarily. Our rivers and wetlands are being sacrificed as billions of dollars in property rights are being granted to an elite minority.”

### **Media Contact**

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Healthy Rivers Dubbo (HRD) is a grass roots community network dedicated to providing a strong voice for our local rivers, aquifers and wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin for the benefit of wildlife, plants and people. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and acknowledge that this land was never ceded.