



Media Release

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NSW told to re-double efforts to cut water take

The Murray Darling Basin Authority released the first compliance report for the 2019-20 water year, and found that NSW has not been doing a good enough job to reduce water extraction in the Barwon Darling water source area.

The rules that manage extraction in the Barwon Darling have been a matter of controversy in recent years, sparking an ICAC investigation, and being pointed to as contributing to the Menindee fish kills in 2019.

“Methods that are used to assess how much water is taken in the Barwon Darling are based on old data that isn’t relevant anymore. It’s likely even more water is being taken than has been reported.” Said Mel Gray, Convenor of Healthy Rivers Dubbo.

The way groundwater take is managed allows accounts to ‘carry over’ any unused volumes from year to year. This creates a situation where an irrigator’s account balance may be several times the total volume of their licence.

“Rules that are too favourable to irrigators have created a situation where even if irrigators are complying with their licence rules, the total volume of water taken can be higher than the allowable limits.

This same ‘carry over’ allowance is being considered for floodplain harvesting, meaning a river would ‘owe’ irrigators water.

NSW’s resistance to complying with the Murray Darling Basin Plan is a cause of concern for people in the Basin, with the Deputy Premier Barilaro and Water Minister Pavey repeatedly threatening to walk away from the Basin Plan.

“We need assurance from our governments that the law will be applied and that our rivers, wetlands, aquifers and floodplains will have enough water to survive. As it is, it seems the Berejiklian Government is content to let the Basin die.” Ms Gray said.

Media contact:

Mel Gray, Convenor Healthy Rivers Dubbo

0431 471 310