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The Hon. Kevin Anderson MP  
Minister for Land and Water  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Monday 22 August 2022

Dear Minister Anderson

### **Poor Regulation of Floodplain Harvesting in NSW**

Central West Environment Council (CWEC) is an umbrella organization representing conservation groups and individuals in central west NSW working to protect the local environment for future generations.

We are very concerned about the decision-making process within the NSW Government on matters relating to ecologically sustainable water management. It is evident through information released to Parliament that scientists and environmental staff within the Department of Planning and Environment recommended stronger management rules for floodplain harvesting regulation than those gazetted on 29 July 2022 in water sharing plans for the Border Rivers, Gwydir and Macquarie Valleys.

The NSW *Water Management Act 2000* prioritises the environment as a water user and critical human needs during a drought. The very low target of 195 GL in Menindee Lakes to restrict access to floodplain harvesting will not meet the critical human needs in the Darling/Baaka or support ecosystem function. To have this low target in Menindee Lakes as the trigger for the in-valley flow targets to manage access to floodplain harvesting is likewise threatening the ecological health of the tributaries of the Darling/Baaka.

It is clear that the outcome of negotiations on the rules to regulate new floodplain harvesting entitlements have been based on political considerations rather than the NSW Government's responsibility to manage water sustainably for all water users, including the environment, First Nations communities and other industries such as tourism.

CWEC considers the recent decisions to support 40 years of free water use by the irrigation industry through limited restrictions is a missed opportunity to improve connectivity flows to the Darling/Baaka and Lower Murray.

The health of native fish populations, protection of significant environmental and cultural values and future of the communities along the Darling/Baaka depend on balanced decision-making based on scientific evidence. We believe the NSW Government has failed to meet the key objects of the NSW *Water Management Act 2000* through the current regulation of floodplain harvesting as a new form of water extraction entitlement.

Yours sincerely

Nick King

Secretary

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