



MEDIA RELEASE

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Calls for Royal Commission to be established by the Federal Government

The Four Corners story "Pumped: Who is benefitting from the billions spent on the Murray-Darling?" aired 24 July, has uncovered that the NSW Government has deliberately acted to undermine the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Large pastoralists on the Lower Darling are calling for a Royal Commission to be established by the Federal Government. They ask that this Royal Commission examine the actions of the NSW Government in changing the irrigation rules for the Barwon-Darling catchment, to deliberately undermine the intent of the Commonwealth Water Act and the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Rob and Katharine McBride of Tolarno Station, with family Kate and James, are pastoralists on the Lower Darling.

In addition to a Royal Commission, the McBrides are calling for Senators to reject the proposal to reduce the recovery of environmental water from the Northern Basin as part of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

The McBrides are also saying that the absence of auditing of NSW Government's compliance to the Barwon-Darling irrigation cap since 2011 is gross negligence by various authorities.

"\$12 billion was committed to recover water to protect the river, the environment and the communities it sustains. It is wrong for environmental water paid for by taxpayers to have been used for irrigation. NSW Government has made this happen, and auditing that should have identified this conduct has not occurred."

"The Murray-Darling Basin Plan was supposed to give us certainty that there would be a healthy river for our future generations. But the future of the river is now more uncertain than ever. We can't maintain our communities and our businesses when we can't even make sure that there will be water for our family and animals to drink."

In 2015-2016, 500km of the Darling River and the Menindee Lakes ran dry for 8 months. This was not because of a drought, it was because of over-extraction upstream. In the last 70 years, this part of the river has only gone dry 3 times, and never for more than 3 months. This 2015-2016 event was an environmental disaster and devastated communities. Tolarno Station has had water security since the 1850s. The future of the Darling River, and those who depend on it, is now more uncertain than ever before.



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