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## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Fish Deaths the Tragic Result of Drought

08/01/2019

The mass fish deaths in Menindee are devastating and represent the terrible impacts the drought has had on the entire Barwon-Darling system and its tributaries, including the damage to rural communities and the environment.

CEO of the NSW Irrigators' Council Luke Simpkins said, "What has happened is as a result of the drought and no water flowing into the rivers. This drought is a devastating time for all of us. This is not about diversions, but about inflows."

Without inflows, blue-green algae events will continue to kill fish. This was predicted in December in an ABC report and algal blooms have killed fish before.

It should be remembered that irrigation farmers on the Upper Darling have not been allocated any water from the system for 18 months because of the drought. As Minister for Regional Water Niall Blair has said, "There's just nothing coming into the system".

Recently, general security allocations (meaning the percentage of a water licence farmers are able to use) have been at 0% in the Gwydir Valley and 0% in the Lower Namoi Valley.

The water simply isn't there for anyone.

As we approach the State Election in March and the Federal Election in May, it is understandable that MPs seeking re-election and candidates seeking election will want to raise their profiles by allocating blame. Ultimately it is their credibility that will evaporate when they seek to deny the existence of the drought and the lack of rainfall/inflows.

For further information:

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Approved JC/TN