

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Overdue facts flushed out in First Flush draft report

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Wild speculation about floodplain harvesting should be put to bed with the release of long-awaited facts in the *Northern Basin First Flush Assessment* Draft Report released today.

“The report provides sensible recommendations to get rivers running again after drought, along with concrete facts about floodplain storage capacity and diversions,” said NSW interim CEO Claire Miller.

“First flush events bring drought-stricken rivers back to life. Any uncertainty over managing these critical flows just delays drought recovery for all water users and undermines confidence.

“NSWIC pushed to have first flush events embedded in the proper regulatory framework, rather relying on water plan suspensions as occurred earlier this year and caused confusion.”

NSWIC is pleased the draft report recognises the need to improve the decision-making framework, including better using local knowledge and improving transparency.

Importantly, the report also identified the total floodplain harvesting capacity in the northern Basin. High-resolution satellite imagery mapped the (approx.) 1400 floodplain harvesting storages with an estimated total holding capacity of 1300 gigalitres.

The remote sensing analysis reveals these storages filled with 220GL, rising from 21GL at the start of February to 243GL by the end of April. This is a fraction of the 4000 GL some have claimed. The analysis said the stored water could include direct rainfall, on-farm runoff/tailwater capture, harvesting from floodplains or pumping from rivers and aquifers.

“These figures must put an end to wild speculation that damages and divides our community of irrigation farmers across NSW. With these facts now available, there are simply no excuses for misinformation to continue,” Ms Miller said.

“While the event could certainly have been managed better, the report identifies that the first flush event led to some *‘wonderful and much needed outcomes for communities in need’* including town water supplies and improving the river health. These flows were a welcome relief for communities in gruelling drought.”

NSWIC await the Final Report.