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## **Ministerial Advice Rejected as Feral Fish go on the Rampage**

The National Irrigators' Council (NIC) has obtained an explosive document which reveals introduced fish species such as carp and trout have been a major cause of native fish extinctions in the Murray Darling Basin (MDB).

NIC's CEO, Tom Chesson said the Ministerial Advice from the Government's Threatened Species Scientific Committee calling on the Government to list introduced fish as a key threatening process was recently rejected by the Minister.

Mr Chesson said the Ministerial Advice highlighted a 'healthy river system' was about more than taking productive water from communities.

"If the MDB Basin Plan is to have any chance of success it has to focus on environmental outcomes not just gigalitres.

"For example the Ministerial Advice makes it very clear that introduced fish have caused the local extinctions of some native fish and are continuing to threaten native fish and frog populations through predation, disease, habitat loss and competition for food.

"The advice to the Minister points out native fish and frog numbers will continue to decline unless action is taken to address the impact of introduced fish species.

"In its current form the Draft Basin Plan is half pregnant, and is setting up the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to fail miserably in its key task of delivering a 'healthy river system'.

"The Draft Basin Plan offers no solutions to problems of invasive fish species, riparian vegetation, urban pollution, or cold-water pollution.

"Just adding water is not a solution to a complex web of environmental problems in the basin and complementary Natural Resource Management action is critical.

"The Sustainable Rivers Audit (used by Governments to rate the health of 23 River Valleys in the MBD) shows the hydrology of eighteen of the twenty-three Valleys is rated as moderate to good, or good.

"The Audit says it confirms the well-known decline of native fish in the Basin, and states; 'common carp were overwhelmingly dominant, being 58% of total fish biomass' across the 23 valleys, as a result, fish health in 20 of the valleys rates extremely poor – poor.

"The Government's own expert body on feral pests, the Invasive Animals CRC, is warning carp numbers in the Lower Darling have already exploded by 4000 percent in the past year."

"Unless the Government broadens its efforts beyond simply removing productive water from communities, carp and trout will continue to decimate our native fish and frog populations and a healthier river system will remain an impossible dream," Mr Chesson said.

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