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**Media Release from the Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes
and
The Anglican Diocese of Riverina**

Water is a limited resource to be shared for everyone: Catholic and Anglican Bishops say in joint statement

An Anglican Bishop and a Catholic Bishop whose respective Dioceses cover the Far West of New South Wales have issued a joint statement on water, expressing their deep concern for regional and rural communities affected by ongoing water shortages, the impact of drought and water trading.

The Anglican Bishop of Riverina, The Right Reverend Donald Kirk and the Catholic Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes, The Most Reverend Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE DD have issued the statement at the start of Lent, the season leading to Easter which is 'a time of reflection and self-discipline.'

'Water is of the essence of God's creation. The Genesis story tells us that the Spirit of God 'swept over the waters' in creative purpose. We see that everything in this good earth that God has given us relies on water to sustain life', the Bishops say in their declaration.

'We encourage everyone to reflect on their use of water and be disciplined about limiting its use so there is enough for all our needs.'

'Indigenous Australians have preserved the river system for tens of thousands of years and it's their communities that are among the hardest hit by water shortages and dying rivers. We recognise that primary producers and people in our communities who are dependent on water from our rivers for everyday domestic use are also struggling,' the statement says.

The Bishops also say they believe the trading of water for personal economic gain is immoral.

'Water is a limited resource to be shared for everyone and not controlled by large multinational businesses,' the statement says.

The Bishops' declaration quotes Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter, *Laudato Si'* – On Care for Our Common Home:

'Even as the quality of available water is constantly diminishing, in some places there is a growing tendency, despite its scarcity, to privatise this resource, turning it into a commodity subject to the laws of the market.' * II.27. The Issue of Water, *Laudato Si'* -An Encyclical Letter on Ecology and Climate, Pope Francis 2015.

The Anglican Diocese of Riverina covers approximately one third of the State of New South Wales and includes the communities of Wilcannia, Broken Hill and Menindee as well as Wentworth and the Riverina communities along the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers. The Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes covers about half of the western region of the state of New South Wales, from the Murray River near Tocumwal to the Queensland border near Lightning Ridge and includes the communities of Wilcannia, Broken Hill as well as Wentworth and parts of the Central West.

A copy of the Bishops' statement is available at

Anglican Diocese of Riverina- anglicanriverina.com

Catholic Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes wf.catholic.org.au

Both Bishop Columba and Bishop Donald are available for interview. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact

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