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PUMPED: FOUR CORNERS

Airs Monday 24TH July 2017

Pumped: Who is benefitting from the billions spent on the Murray Darling?

"People are profiteering...It's the biggest water grab in Australia's history." Grazier

In Australia's most important river system, the water is so precious, it could be liquid gold.

"People want to get water in their hands because if you get water in your hands that's big money." Grazier

Stretching from Queensland to South Australia, billions of dollars in taxpayer's money has been poured into rescuing the rivers and streams of the Murray-Darling Basin to save it from environmental collapse. But nearly five years on from a landmark agreement to restore the river, something is wrong.

"People are beyond angry. I think they're dismayed. People are very distressed." Former Murray-Darling Basin Authority official

Along the river system many are saying despite all the promises, water is disappearing from the river.

"We don't know where that water's going, and we don't know what's happening to that water. It just seems bizarre, and particularly when there are so many major players that are potentially exploiting the system." Ecologist

On Monday night *Four Corners* will reveal how the plan to rescue the Murray-Darling Basin river system is being undermined.

"We put up with droughts for hundreds of years. That's just life living here, but that's not what happened." Grazier

Reporter **Linton Besser** investigates where the money, and the water is going.

"A lot of people take it for granted, like flushing the toilet...I just hope that people with the most money aren't the people that are getting all the say." Mayor

He finds communities divided.

"I think for anyone that lives on a river, they know the argument about the people upstream are always the greedy buggers taking all the water, and the people downstream are the people - that you might seek to ignore - who are wasting water. I don't say that." Irrigator Lobbyist

With many wondering how they will survive.

“What's going to happen to the rest of us who are trying to just have a shower, brush our teeth and let our sheep and cattle have a drink of water when you're standing on the riverbank and all you can see is a puddle of water, but you know that people upstream have huge amounts of water?” Grazier

And questions whether the billions in tax payer's money has been well spent.

“We all hoped because of the state of the Murray-Darling Basin that the basin plan would essentially take this patient, which was essentially in the intensive care unit, out of the intensive care unit and be able to make it walk again. But essentially the basin plan is not working the way it was meant to work.” Ecologist

***Pumped*, reported by Linton Besser and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 24th July at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday 25th July at 10.00am and Wednesday 26th at 11pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.00pm AEST, [ABC iview](#) and at abc.net.au/4corners.**