

Media Release



19 January 2024

Commonwealth must come clean on new Basin Plan outcomes

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says answers are needed over where the Commonwealth Government is intending to take water from and for what purpose following changes to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF President Emma Germano has written to Commonwealth Water Minister Tanya Plibersek and is concerned the unclear, scatter-gun approach to environmental water buybacks will not work and that Victoria will once again unfairly be burdened with excessive water buybacks.

“The VFF is very concerned about the implications of the Bill for Victoria. Removal of the buyback cap and bypassing the socio-economic test highlights a Federal Government with little interest in those that will be impacted.”

“The VFF is deeply concerned about the Commonwealth’s omission in setting any valley targets for water recovery and there being no identification of any environmental outcomes which they seek to achieve.”

“Recovering water downstream here in Victoria and thinking it’ll benefit areas such as the Darling River and Menindee Lakes is complete fantasy.”

“We are seeking clarification from the Commonwealth as to what valley targets will be established across the Northern and Southern Basins as well as identifying related environmental outcomes to give farmers and rural communities some understanding of what amount of water is being targeted and for which area.”

“It is not unreasonable for impacted regional communities to have some insight into the volumes of water the Commonwealth is seeking to recover and the environmental outcomes that will be achieved by these water recoveries.”

“The VFF is also seeking Minister Plibersek’s assurance that socio-economic impact assessments will clearly identify impacts at a local community level and that compensation measures are sustained and appropriately targeted. Socio-economic analysis must also be peer reviewed and made publicly available.”

Ms Germano said her request to the Minister came ahead of two regional meetings led by Victorian Water Minister Harriet Shing at Shepparton which were attended by Ms Germano and VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy.

“We are encouraged by the Victorian Water Minister making the effort to visit the farming communities that will be hit hard by these changes.”

“Minister Shing has a strong grasp of the issues and remains opposed to water buybacks and is focussed on achieving the outcomes that the state governments originally agreed to when the Basin Plan was created.”

“To date, Minister Plibersek has refused to visit the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and listen to impacted communities.”

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“It is critical that she does this to ensure any implementation of the new laws takes into account the impact on the Victorian environment and communities which are being totally ignored at the moment,” Ms Germano said.

ENDS

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