

Media Release



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VFF welcomes Basin Plan action

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has welcomed decisions made at the Ministerial Council meeting in Brisbane yesterday.

VFF Water Council Chairman Richard Anderson said Victorian farmers will be pleased to see the states agreeing to address deliverability issues in the Lower Murray.

“Over the last 18 months the VFF has expressed great concerns towards deliverability risks in the Mallee due to increased developments placing pressure on existing irrigators.”

“This prompted Minister Neville in July to call in all new licenses in the Mallee for Victoria but the other Mallee states did not agree to curb development.”

Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia will now work together to address deliverability shortfalls, with NSW and SA also agreeing to review new license applications.

“This is a big win for existing irrigators to ensure they are sufficiently protected during dry times, its pleasing to see all three states have listened to the calls of the VFF,” said Mr Anderson.

“We know at current demand levels there are risks of delivery shortfalls. As plants mature these risks will be even greater so it’s important we start to address this problem now.”

The VFF argued leading up to the meeting that the Inspector General should not be granted expanded powers to review the Murray Darling Sharing Agreement.

“We are pleased the Basin States agreed with the VFF’s position. The Northern Basin Review recently completed by the Inspector General has shown the office lacks understanding of water issues and cannot handle the water management complexities associated with the Sharing Agreement,” Mr Anderson said.

“The VFF is supportive of the Inspector General fulfilling his compliance function that was agreed at Ministerial Council in August this year, but a referral of powers from the states to the Commonwealth would be utterly inappropriate.”

Mr Anderson said the VFF is also pleased that Ministers acknowledged the problems with the Constraints projects and unrealistic timeframes proposed under the Basin Plan.

“We have long argued a 2024 deadline for Constraints was not possible, even the Productivity Commission in January concurred with this.”

“Finally Minister Littleproud will have to stop using language that has inflamed distraught rural communities since his appointment. He simply cannot deliver a Basin Plan in full and on time, Basin Sates simply do not agree with him,” Mr Anderson concluded.

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