

Media Release



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Keelty Report confirms low inflows, not water rules the problem

Today's report from the Interim Inspector General of the Murray Darling Basin into inflows and water sharing between the states has confirmed that low inflows are the cause of irrigators' water woes - not the Murray Darling Basin Agreement.

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Water Council Chair Richard Anderson said the report provides clear information about a complex issue.

"We are pleased to have some clear facts that farmers can understand. We need to make sure information is updated and continues to be made available to irrigators and farming communities,"

"The report confirms that more than two-thirds of the decline in average inflows is attributable to changes in flows from the Murray upstream of Albury and Victorian tributaries. NSW tributaries have experienced the greatest reduction in inflows which is why General Security allocations are so low," Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the report provides a clear explanation about how water is shared across the Murray system, including information about inflows, deliveries and losses, as well as calling for a single point of truth where farmers can access information.

"The VFF welcomes the call for truth. We also need to see that the type of information in the report is made available in real time so farmers can understand what parcels of water are running down the Murray and its tributaries," Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the report details information on conveyance losses concluding that in 2018-19, losses accounted for 25% of the water delivered, which is to the same as 2006-07 and 2009-10 during the millennium drought when losses also averaged 25 per cent.

"This information should already have been readily available to the community if the Murray Darling Basin Authority was doing its job properly" Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the report highlighted the differences between the states and their allocation policies.

"Victoria and South Australia limited the amount of entitlements issued, whereas NSW issued greater volumes of General Security with less reliability."

The report also examined environmental water and confirmed the majority of water currently held in storages has come from Victorian entitlements.

The report does not believe that eliminating carryover would result in increased allocations, rather people with any unused water would likely use the water themselves or sell it to another irrigator to avoid forfeiting their water.

With Prime Minister Scott Morrison's recent pledge to respond to COVID-19 with of a major boost to private industry, Mr Anderson said there is a clear opportunity for government to take action on making needed changes to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

"Removing investment uncertainty, risks to food production and regional employment caused by reduced agricultural water through the Basin Plan would lead to a significant boost to the economy and jobs in the Murray Basin", Mr Anderson said.

"Now that there is greater clarity about how water is shared between the states, it's time to make the changes to the Basin Plan that the VFF has long been calling for, including scrapping the 450GL upwater, no more water recovery in the Southern Basin and addressing compliance issues in the Northern Basin," Mr Anderson said.

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Media Contact:

Richard Anderson, VFF Water Council Chair, 0428 832 210

Charles Everist, VFF Stakeholder Policy & Advocacy, 0400 199 522