

Media Release



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Ministerial Council ducks big issues with Basin Plan

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has expressed its disappointment that today's Ministerial Council meeting failed to address major issues with the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF Water Council Chair Richard Anderson said Victorian farmers were hoping that the Commonwealth Government would provide leadership and deliver real change to support farmers.

"Leading into Ministerial Council, our discussion with Minister Pitt was clear – change to the Basin Plan is needed to create certainty and provide jobs."

"The VFF still hopes Minister Pitt will approach the Basin Plan with a fresh set of eyes and stand up to the bureaucrats and fight for agriculture. Today, that didn't seem to be the case."

"The VFF has provided a pragmatic roadmap using the adaptive management approach that is already in the legislation. But the Commonwealth refuses to consider adapting the Plan to reflect our current state of knowledge. The Plan and the Commonwealth are stuck in a time warp," Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the VFF remains concerned that Commonwealth bureaucrats continue to dominate discussion and will not make necessary changes to the Basin Plan.

"It is incomprehensible that the Commonwealth Coalition government continues to ignore the plight of irrigators and regional communities."

"New South Wales has stated it will not attend future meetings, unless the Commonwealth meaningfully engages on contentious Basin Plan issues and actively seeks out solutions."

"The VFF believes the Victorian Water Minister should join with the NSW Minister if this continues to be the case and boycott future Ministerial Council meetings," Mr Anderson said.

The Victorian and New South Wales water ministers put forward a motion to review the 2024 deadline for supply and efficiency projects. South Australia, Queensland and the ACT were however unwilling to discuss the matter.

"Failing to address the Basin Plan deadline is a kick in the guts for farmers."

While a renewed commitment to ensure the socio-economic criteria for the 450GL of up water was achieved today, Mr Anderson said the VFF was disappointed in not seeing the 450GL scrapped altogether.

"Why continue to flog a dead horse?"

“The 450GL will cause socio-economic hardships and cannot be delivered without third party impacts on both farmers and the environment. It just makes no sense to keep pursuing this.” Mr Anderson said the VFF was pleased to see some positive outcomes from the meeting with New South Wales and South Australia acknowledging deliverability issues and committing to work with Victoria on principles of extraction.

“The VFF has lobbied on deliverability issues for years, it’s pleasing to finally see some progress here.”

Mr Anderson also welcomed news that Victoria will now be engaged in New South Wales and Queensland’s floodplain harvesting review.

“The VFF has continued to point out the importance of the Northern Basin cleaning up its act, it’s good that Victoria will now have some oversight on this issue.”

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