

# Media Release



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## Socio Economic Report Fails to Deliver Certainty

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is critical of the recently released draft Socio-Economic Report into the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF Water Council Chair Richard Anderson said whilst the report acknowledged the severe social and economic hardship faced by rural communities, it failed to make much needed recommendations to give irrigators certainty about their future.

“The report fails to clearly recommend that there should be no further buybacks and fails to rule out recovery of the 450GL of upwater. Instead the report lamely recommends the ‘slowing’ of water recovery.”

“Rural communities must have certainty and expected to see a recommendation that the 450GL should be scrapped - the VFF has long argued for this to be removed,” Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the recovery of an additional 450GL is simply not possible.

“One it can’t be delivered; and two, it will devastate irrigation communities that have already been knocked to their knees,” said Mr Anderson.

The report suggests water buybacks have contributed to ‘efficiency and improvement’ but provides little acknowledgement of the negative impacts of water buybacks.

“These comments ignore the costs to the irrigators caused by stranded assets, the costs to irrigation businesses of increased water prices, and the costs to irrigation communities of the job losses that result from lost irrigation production and associated processing and support industries”, said Mr Anderson.

Mr Anderson said the report’s recommendations fail to provide the certainty needed by irrigators and their rural communities.

“The VFF has long argued that the Basin Plan needs an end date, currently after a review in 2026, we could all be facing even more water recovery for the water environment,” said Mr Anderson.

“Farmers just want to get on with farming and not have the uncertainty of further water recovery looming in the background,” said Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson also said the report has conflicting messages around constraints.

“In one section it suggests constraints should be relaxed, but in other parts it talks about the inability to deliver water below the Barmah Choke and third party impacts.”

“We have to remember we are working with a natural river system and it is physically impossible to deliver large volumes of water downstream without damaging the Goulburn River or the Barmah Choke,” Mr Anderson said.

The VFF will be providing a detailed submission to the Independent Panel as its recommendations need significant strengthening.

**ENDS**

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