

Media Release



Friday 13 December 2019

Time for action on Basin Plan

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is calling on the Commonwealth Government to finally acknowledge the problems with the Murray Darling Basin Plan and work with the states for solutions at the upcoming Ministerial Council meeting on 17 December.

VFF Water Council Chair Richard Anderson said Victorian farmers want to see policies delivered to fix the Basin Plan, rather than more reviews.

“We are beyond shuffling deck chairs; we need real reforms from the Commonwealth. Irrigated agriculture needs to know from the Commonwealth Government it has a viable future.”

“Farming communities are suffering under the Basin Plan. The Commonwealth can no longer continue to distract from the problems of the Plan by holding reviews and referring powers,” Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson expressed concern at the suggestion that expanded powers be provided to the Interim Inspector General to conduct a review of the Sharing Agreement.

“The Sharing Agreement is not the problem; the Basin Plan is the problem. This needs to be the focus of discussions next week,” Mr Anderson said.

Mr Anderson said the Ministerial Council should focus on delivering the VFF’s 10 point plan announced last week.

“Farmers need certainty over when the Plan will end. Currently the legislation allows for a review in 2026 and more water recovery could start all over again.”

“If the 605 gigalitres (GL) in environmental offsets cannot be achieved, Minister Littleproud should not threaten buybacks but look to improve the environment through projects other than just increased flows.”

“Excessive floodplain harvesting, lack of metering and over use in the Northern Basin must be vigorously addressed to reverse the environmental catastrophe that is occurring and reinstate the flows to the Murray that occurred in the past.”

“South Australia cannot continue to be allowed to evaporate 800GL in the Lower Lakes.”

Mr Anderson also highlighted the need for the Ministerial Council to address deliverability issues within the Southern Basin.

“The VFF has long argued that delivery risks are increasing as growth in horticulture downstream of the Barmah Choke is changing river demand patterns and must be urgently addressed by State and Commonwealth Governments.”

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“The Victorian Government has acted and called in all new licenses but New South Wales and South Australia are continuing to allow new developments which puts existing irrigators water security at risk,” Mr Anderson concluded.

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