

Media Release

14 February 2019

VFF shocked at reactionary Federal Labor

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is today calling for all parliamentarians to vote against a proposed private members bill, to be introduced by Labor, to remove the 1500 GL cap on purchasing water to fulfil the obligations of the Murry-Darling Basin Plan.

“The cap was originally put in place to protect communities from a number of negative consequences of previous purchases and to encourage the government to spend money on projects that provided benefit to both the environment and farmers, such as supply and efficiency measures.” Said VFF Water Council Chair, Richard Anderson.

Since the start of the year the Basin Plan has been heavily scrutinised. There has been public interest in mass fish deaths and drought stricken farmers, and the Productivity Commission has recently released a five year assessment of the Basin Plan.

“These past six months have been tough for the environment and farmers, with little water available.” Said Mr. Anderson. “When there is no water in the system, no one gets water. Until we get a decent amount of rain we, farmers and the environment, are all vulnerable to drought.”

Since the Basin Plan commenced it has helped the environment. There has been terrific work done by all environmental water holders to improve the rivers flow regime and to boost environmental values. The plan is on track to delivery vastly improved environmental outcomes in the long term.

“The way forward is not to change the rules every time there is an issue, but to follow the Basin Plan and assess at appropriate intervals how the plan is working.” Said Mr. Anderson.

The Productivity Commission has done this in their recent report, where they identified the risks to the plan. Rather than political decisions controlling the future of the Basin Plan, politicians would be better to look at the findings of the Productivity Commission and concentrate on mitigating the impacts to those whose livelihoods depend on the basin.

Basin communities, environmental water holders and the water market need certainty – not contemptuous politicians, constantly moving the goalposts for political gain.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.