



Media Release

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Tony Burke ignores rural communities

Tony Burke's suggestion to undo agreed positions of the Basin Plan if Labor is elected highlights his party's total disregard for rural communities, rural people and rural jobs.

"Buybacks of water have shown to have disastrous impacts on rural communities by creating stranded irrigation assets with remaining farmers having to foot the bill," said Mr Richard Anderson, Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Water Council Chairman.

Victorian farmers finally received some good news in December 2018 following the Ministerial Council where a clear criterion for considering the socio-economic impacts of the 450 gigalitres water recovery was announced.

"Tony Burke wants to tear up any certainty that was created for farmers in December 2018 which is simply unscrupulous," said Mr Anderson.

"It is unlikely that all the Basin States will agree to Burke's arrogant changes given they just adopted them in December. Burke must know the Commonwealth cannot deliver the Basin Plan alone. He is making commitments he knows he can't keep and no doubt he will blame the States when he fails to deliver.

"This highlights Burke's total disregard for establishing effective working relationships with the States and the lengths he will go to try and win the Federal election.

"We have existing evidence that a 2750 gigalitre Basin Plan will deliver strong environmental outcomes, there is a real possibility that if the 450 gigalitres is recovered it will not be able to be delivered.

"The Commonwealth Environmental Holder reported to the Ministerial Council meeting in December 2018 there were problems in delivering environmental water due to limited channel capacity.

"Mr Burke is ignoring the simple reality that extra water simply can't be delivered, favouring populist point scoring.

"It's important to not confuse issues in the Northern and Southern Basin.

"Mr Burke also wants to tear up the long standing Menindee Lakes water sharing arrangements in the Murray Darling Basin Agreement. This has the potential to reduce the quantity and reliability of water supplies to Victorian New South Wales and South Australian irrigators.

"If Mr Burke, when reading this Agreement, managed to get to Clause 5 he would realise that the Agreement can only be amended with the agreement of New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. Another empty populist promise.

"Farmers in Northern Victoria are facing serious challenges with limited water availability and high water prices, yet Tony Burke is happy to ignore Victorian farmer's pain and the jobs of men and women in regional Victoria to do sweet heart deals with South Australian to shore up swinging seats there.

"There is an urgent need for our Commonwealth politicians to listen to regional communities and seriously work through the serious issues we face. Enough of superficial populist politics," said Mr Anderson.

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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.