

Media Release



Thursday 1 August 2019

Basin Plan does not provide security for dairy farmers

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and United Dairyfarmers of Victoria (UDV) refute claims made by the Federal Minister for Water David Littleproud yesterday that the Basin Plan has provided security for the dairy industry.

“The Minister’s comments are a complete insult to the Victorian dairy industry. They show just how out of touch with farmers the Federal Government is,” said Mr Paul Mumford, UDV President.

“Dairy farmers in northern Victoria, who produce over 80 per cent of the milk from the Basin, are telling me that the Basin Plan has resulted in local job losses, and has created a great deal of uncertainty for the future of their businesses.

“It is very disappointing that Minister Littleproud has threatened further water buybacks leading into the Water Ministerial Council on Sunday 4 August. This threat generates real insecurity in the dairy industry,” said Mr Mumford.

Minister Littleproud has incorrectly claimed the Commonwealth Government can buy 252 giganlitres (GL) of water in Victoria and 273 GL in New South Wales (NSW).

“In 2015, the Coalition Government legislated a 1,500 GL cap on buybacks and 1,224 GL has been purchased to date. Therefore, only 276 GL remains to be purchased by the Commonwealth, not the 525 GL Minister Littleproud is threatening Victoria and NSW with,” said Mr Richard Anderson, VFF Water Council Chair.

The Basin Plan aims to finalise all water buybacks by 2024. However, in the recent Murray Darling Basin Plan Five Year Assessment, the Productivity Commission described these timeframes as unrealistic.

“Minister Littleproud cannot ignore the Productivity Commission’s recommendations and we hope the State Water Ministers hold him to account at Sunday’s meeting to extend these buyback timeframes,” said Mr Anderson.

“Minister Littleproud assumes Basin communities will benefit from environmental projects through increased job opportunities, but he ignores the jobs already lost as a result of the Basin Plan,” said Mr Anderson.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority’s community profiles reported 5,116 job losses in Victorian agricultural production, compared with 2,877 jobs losses in New South Wales and 2,287 job losses in South Australia.

“The job losses in Victoria are dramatically higher than the other Basin States. The job losses and the flow on effect to regional communities cannot be ignored. The pain and uncertainty caused by the Basin Plan is real. Threatening farmers with further buybacks highlights how out of touch Minister Littleproud really is,” said Mr Anderson.

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Media Contacts:

Richard Anderson, VFF Water Council Chair, 0428 832 210

Paul Mumford, UDV President, 0439 790 469

Heather Smillie, VFF Stakeholder, Media & Communications Officer, 0400 874 589

Farrer House 24-28 Collins Street Melbourne 3000

Ph. 1300 882 833 | Fax. 03 9207 5500 | E-mail. vff@vff.org.au | www.vff.org.au

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.