

Media Release



Wednesday 10 July 2019

VFF welcomes tighter control of water licence approvals

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) today applauds Minister for Water Lisa Neville for prioritising the protection of the Murray River and existing irrigators by limiting new water licences in the lower Murray region.

“This is fantastic news for farmers and river communities that rely on the health of the Murray River. I thank Minister Neville for listening to the concerns of farmers and for her leadership in protecting the River,” said Mr Richard Anderson, VFF Water Council Chairman.

“Victoria is now leading the Basin States in prioritising the health of the River and protecting the industries that depend on it. It is critical that New South Wales and South Australia take action now so we can collectively put a pause on the rapid expansion of water licences, review water trading rules, and then decide how to move forward in a way that protects everyone.

“Careful management of water licences in the lower Murray will not only protect irrigators in that section of the river, but also farmers in the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District that have had a large amount of their water traded downstream,” said Mr Anderson.

A recent Aither report commissioned by the Victorian Government found that the current irrigation demand for horticultural plantings in the Southern Basin is 1,230 GL per year and will increase to 1,400 GL when the plantings reach maturity. This is 55 per cent higher than recent estimates by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

In response to this discrepancy, the Ministerial Council in December 2018 directed the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) to produce new modelling to quantify the risks to the environment and irrigators of increased irrigation demand downstream of the Barmah Choke.

“The new modelling and review of water trading rules must be an urgent priority for the MDBA,” said Mr Anderson.

Minister Neville announced today that she will personally review all licence applications in the lower Murray region for the next 12 months. Minister Neville has said she will use a precautionary approach when assessing new licence applications and the risk of negative impacts on existing licence holders and the environment.

“In late May, Minister Neville also agreed to examine the inter-valley trade rules and we look forward to seeing report, which is expected to be released later this month.

“Although today’s announcement from the Victorian State Government is welcome, there is still much work to be done by all levels of government as well as the MDBA to ensure the long term future of the Murray River,” said Mr Anderson.

ENDS

Media Contacts:

Richard Anderson, VFF Water Council Chairman, 0428 832 210

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

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.

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