

Media Release



10 November 2020

Broken promises with 450 GL on-farm projects

The Victorian Farmers Federation is calling for a stop to on-farm water acquisition to meet the 450GL up water target in addition to the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF Water Council Chair Richard Anderson said he was disappointed the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture and Water was continuing to pursue on-farm water recovery despite government's promise not to do so.

"Minister Pitt announced in September that Commonwealth was going to "pivot" its water recovery efforts to off farm, but it now seems the Department is ignoring its own Minister."

"Basin Ministers reconfirmed their commitment in June this year to apply the strengthened socio-economic criteria to projects for the 450GL, yet this seems to have also been ignored," Mr Anderson said.

The Department released six South Australian on farm projects on its "Have Your Say" website last week that propose to return a combined 288 megalitres (ML) to the environment. The proposed projects are seeking to change vine rootstocks, installing netting and drip irrigation.

"These projects will result in there being 288ML less water in the consumptive pool that is available for agriculture," Mr Anderson said.

"Government might think a few projects will be okay and have no impact, but it's the cumulative impact the VFF is worried about, and the regional impacts of less water for agriculture", Mr Anderson said.

Since September 2019, 12 projects have been released for public comment for the 450GL water recovery, including the six from last week. All of these projects have been on-farm and will reduce the amount of water available to farmers.

"The proposals lack transparency, total project costs are not provided, nor is the Government funding contribution," Mr Anderson said.

Independent water advisory group Aither has also criticised on farm projects for driving up water allocation prices and causing social and economic impacts on water market participants and regional communities.

Mr Anderson said VFF will put forward a submission to the Department on the proposed projects and encouraged farmers to put forward their own concerns. Public comment closes on 20th November.

Mr Anderson concluded by reiterating the VFF's strong position to scrap the 450GL up-water target.

"The VFF has consistently argued the 450GL target should be scrapped. It makes no sense for the Commonwealth to be pursuing this water as it can't be physically delivered, and it destroys confidence in farming," Mr Anderson said.

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“It’s time the Government gets real with the Basin Plan. We need real and meaningful change. We cannot continue to pursue the 450GL and these projects should not be supported,” Mr Anderson said.

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