



Media Release



26 November 2020

NSW and Victorian farmers call on Basin Ministers to amend the Plan

NSW Farmers and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) have jointly written to all Murray Darling Basin state governments and the Commonwealth, calling for the Basin Plan to be amended.

NSW Farmers President James Jackson said farming communities across New South Wales and Victoria want to see the forthcoming Murray Darling Basin Ministerial Council meeting agree to changes to the Plan to inject confidence back into the regional economy.

“As the voice for farming communities across our nation’s two biggest agricultural producing states, governments must take notice of our call to amend the Basin Plan,” Mr Jackson said.

“Changes must be made to the Basin Plan to ensure farmers can once again farm with confidence and certainty, creating the jobs needed to lead Australia’s COVID-19 economic recovery.”

“The Productivity Commission and most recently the WESA review and Sefton report have noted that the legislated deadline for delivering the Basin Plan in 2024 will not be achieved. Yet governments have not agreed to amend the Plan to reflect this reality.”

“The Independent Review of Lower Lakes Science suggested the original Basin Plan assumptions will be largely irrelevant given rising sea levels over the barrages and reduced inflows as a result of climate change.”

“We are urging Ministers to acknowledge the inherent flaws that exist in the Plan and agree to start the process to change the Plan on Friday.”

VFF President David Jochinke said the Basin Plan was never to remain static.

“NSW Farmers and the VFF agree that key areas of the Basin Plan must be changed to provide certainty to our farming communities,” Mr Jochinke said.

“The proposed recovery of an additional 450 gigalitres of water must be abandoned and the Plan must recognise that environmental outcomes can be achieved by a range of measures, not just clawing water back from irrigators.”

“We need greater certainty around water buybacks. Promises in press releases are insufficient; promises to only recover water off farm have already been broken. The promises in press releases must be formalised by going back to Parliament to amend the Plan.”

“We need to see a restructure of the Murray Darling Basin Authority to ensure river operations are managed separately to focus on all water users needs, the paying customers. Currently the MDBA has an all-consuming focus on implementing the Basin Plan, neglecting their day-to-day river operation responsibilities.”

“Farmers do not want our political leaders to rely on old water planning scenarios that are known to be out of date. We urge Ministers on Friday to amend the Plan,” Mr Jochinke concluded.

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