

Media Release



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Ministerial Council fails community again

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is disappointed that another Ministerial Council meeting was wasted yesterday.

All Basin Water Ministers came together with Federal Water Minister Pitt to discuss progress on the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism.

VFF President Emma Germano said the VFF and local communities had hoped that the Ministerial Council would acknowledge that there is no hope of delivering the 605 GL by June 2024.

“The key question the Ministerial Council did not address is how a shortfall in the 605GL will be managed. In the past the Commonwealth has suggested that a shortfall would be met through water buybacks.”

“While Minister Pitt has promised no buybacks, it remains a real option if a change of policy or Government occurs. The Commonwealth is legally responsible for this shortfall, which they seem to be ignoring,” Ms Germano said.

The VFF has identified seven projects that it believes will not be completed by 2024, including:

- The Yanco Creek Offtake in New South Wales that is estimated to offset 7-13 GL.
- The Menindee Lakes Project which is projected to offset 71-106 GL. The remaining 5 projects related to constraint relaxation which are predicted to offset 70-83 GL.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said the VFF had been very clear that constraint relaxation is impossible in the timeframes.

“Constraint relaxation requires the permission of over 3000 farmers to flood their land. It was unlikely in 2018, now it’s impossible.”

“The Commonwealth may say that 75% of the projects are on track, but the actual offset volumes are not. A 200 plus gigalitre shortfall for the 605 GL is a real risk”, said Mr Leahy.

While Ministerial Council agreed to New South Wales re-scoping the Menindee and Yanco Creek projects, it is clear that the required offset volume will not be achieved by July 2024.

“It seems the Commonwealth is determined to kick the issue of a 605 GL shortfall down the road, and that is failing basin communities,” Mr Leahy said.

ENDS

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