

# Media Release

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## Commonwealth must support Basin Plan reform push

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has called on the Commonwealth Government to support recent moves in the Parliament to undertake much needed reform to Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF President Emma Germano welcomed the attempt by Nationals members who tried to force changes to the Basin Plan saying it was a signal to the Government that it must take action to support farming communities.

“Leadership needs to be taken now to make important changes to the Basin Plan including scrapping the additional 450GL up-water target and legislating the Government’s own commitment not to buy back water from farmers who have already given so much.”

“The VFF has continually said the 450GL cannot be delivered down the river without flooding hundreds of landholders and their communities. We also know that buybacks kill jobs and kill communities.”

“We have been consistent in calling on the Government to take this action and its time they now listen to their own Members of Parliament and the communities they represent,” Ms Germano said.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said after doing all the heavy lifting to contribute towards the Basin Plan, Victorian farming communities want to see reform so they can keep going forward with confidence.

“Victorian farming communities have paid the greatest price for implementing the Basin Plan and we continue to pay a price every day the Commonwealth fails to deliver meaningful reform.”

“We have already contributed over 800GL to the Plan in addition to our share of the 605GL offset projects. A 2018 VFF analyses of job losses caused by the Basin Plan showed that half of the 10,280 jobs losses across four states were a consequence of this water leaving Victoria. We have sacrificed so much already – we have done all the heavy lifting, but we just can’t afford to give anymore.”

Mr Leahy said scrapping the 450GL of additional up-water was a sensible move backed by thorough analysis by numerous agencies.

“It has been proven that this water cannot be delivered to South Australia and would require over 3,000 farmers agreeing to having their properties flooded. We are already witnessing the decimation of the Barmah Choke and the Goulburn River just to deliver greater volumes of water downstream. More environmental damage will occur across the whole river system if South Australia and the Commonwealth push forward with the 450GL.”

“I hope that South Australian Senators can take a step back and take a look at what has actually already been achieved for the environment. Unlike the Millennium Drought where we had desperate problems with salinity and acid sulphate soils in the Lower Lakes, we did not have those issues in the recent drought. That’s thanks to the Basin Plan already doing its job.”

"The Commonwealth must change its blinkered view towards delivering the Basin Plan in full and on time. Its implementation was always intended to be adaptive and responsive to emerging issues and new information."

"We know that we can continue to achieve positive environmental outcomes across the Basin without taking more water from the people who feed our nation," Mr Leahy concluded.

**ENDS**

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