

Media Release



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Floodplain harvesting a risk for Victorian irrigators

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has outlined the risk for Victorian irrigators arising from floodplain harvesting in the NSW Northern Murray Darling Basin.

In a submission to the NSW Parliament' Legislative Council Select Committee on Floodplain Harvesting, VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy outlined the reasons for Victorian irrigator concerns towards water use in the Northern Basin.

"The VFF is concerned there remain historic issues in the Northern Basin around water management, compliance, floodplain harvesting and metering practices, and a lack of transparency. There needs to be strong rules in place around floodplain harvesting and these rules need to be enforced."

"Inflows into the Menindee Lakes and to the Murray River have dramatically reduced in the last 20 years. We know the underlying cause of this is drought and climate variability, but floodplain harvesting and noncompliance have also had an impact," Mr Leahy said.

Mr Leahy explained that Victorian farming communities are concerned about the flows into the Menindee Lakes because they have a direct impact on Victoria's water entitlement and allocation framework.

"When there are reduced flows in the Darling River, additional pressure is placed on the Goulburn and Murray systems to deliver our shared commitment to South Australia under the Basin Agreement."

"That means Victorian and NSW Riverina farmers receive a lower allocation."

Mr Leahy recommended that the first step to cleaning up issues in the Northern Basin would be to see all water use metered.

"Metering has helped to deliver efficiency and transparency and Victorian farmers are required to follow a strict compliance regime with year round enforcement."

"Once water usage in the Northern Basin is metered and it can be determined how much is needed, the NSW Government can then set about adjusting its entitlement framework to meet its obligations under the Basin Plan and Basin Agreement."

Mr Leahy also said proposed carryover rules in the Northern Basin needed to be fair and realistic.

"Any new entitlement framework must be clear and transparent including realistic and sustainable carryover rules. The VFF does not support unlimited carryover or proposals for 500% carryover. This ultimately results in Northern Basin farmers taking more entitlement than they own."

ENDS

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