

Media Release



8 April 2022

Jobs to go under Albanese's water plan

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has warned that jobs across regional Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia will be lost if Anthony Albanese's policy for water recovery is implemented under the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF President Emma Germano said Federal Labor's five-point policy showed a total misunderstanding of the Basin Plan and a total disregard for jobs in regional communities.

"Mr Albanese's plan for pushing on with the 450GL up-water target will result in buybacks and will suck more water out of irrigated agriculture. We know what this does because we've seen it before – it kills jobs and kills regional communities."

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said Mr Albanese and his team have shown they do not understand the Basin Plan and had failed to consult Basin communities.

"The recovery of the 450GL up-water target was never guaranteed in legislation and was always subject to socio-economic neutrality. This was later reaffirmed with the socio-economic test that was unanimously agreed by Basin state and federal governments at the 2018 Ministerial Council meeting. The 450GL can only be recovered if there are no negative social economic outcomes."

"Section 6.04 of the Basin Plan sets out legislated water recovery of 2,750GL. Over 2,100GL has now been recovered with the remainder to be recovered through 36 offset projects worth 605GL. That means the environment is receiving an extra four Sydney Harbours' worth of water which has fixed the environmental damage and degradation that South Australia suffered in the millennium drought."

"The science is now telling us the health of the environment in South Australia has improved significantly since the millennium drought. The environment is receiving 2,100GL of additional water but Federal Labor is ignoring these gains and just wants more water to sure-up city votes at the expense of regional communities," Mr Leahy said.

"Federal Labor's five-point plan only mentions its desire to achieve positive outcomes for South Australia, but totally ignores all the negative impacts. We know from analysis previously carried out by the VFF that the Basin Plan has already cost 10,000 full time agricultural jobs with over 5,000 coming out of Victoria."

"Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville has been unequivocal in ensuring there are no buybacks and understands the impact these issues have on local jobs. Why didn't Mr Albanese speak with her before announcing his policy?"

Ms Germano concluded saying, "Mr Albanese needs to get real with regional communities. He says he wants secure jobs for all Australians and wants to make more things in Australia. But if he takes more water from irrigated agriculture, we won't be able to do that for much longer in Northern Victoria. He'll then have to start telling us which irrigation districts and food processing plants he wants to shut down."

ENDS