

Media Release



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Commonwealth Government ignores Basin Plan facts and history

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has raised concerns that the Commonwealth Government is rewriting history in an attempt to buyback and deliver extra water to South Australia under the Murray Darling Basin Plan.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said comments from the Federal Environment and Water Minister Tanya Plibersek in Parliament this week ignored the history behind the 450 GL up-water target.

“Minister Plibersek is rewriting history when she comments that every state must do what they promised and return the 450 GL to the system.”

“The 450 GL was a political deal struck between the Commonwealth and South Australia to get them to sign up to the Basin Plan. It was not a deal with Victoria and New South Wales.”

“Minister Plibersek is also ignoring the comments her colleague Tony Burke made in 2012 when he said delivery of the 450 GL would only possible if there was no social and economic down-side.”

Mr Leahy said the Commonwealth must respect the position of the Victorian Government, which has repeatedly stated it does not support water buybacks.

“The 450 GL was never promised by Victoria. In fact, the Victorian Government in 2012 ran with a headline press release that a 3200GL Basin Plan is unacceptable.”

“I have recently spoken to the new Victorian Water Minister Harriet Shing, and she has reaffirmed the Victorian Government’s position to me that it does not support buybacks as they do not pass the socio-economic test agreed to in 2018 by state and federal water ministers.”

Mr Leahy said it appeared the Commonwealth Government is desperate to implement a buyback policy by talking down the Basin Plan.

“The Commonwealth keeps talking down the plan, saying it has not delivered for the environment, when in fact it has delivered over 2,100 GL, which is having a positive impact on the health of our rivers.”

“Water buybacks were responsible for over 10,000 full time job losses in agriculture. If the Commonwealth gets its way and implements a buyback policy, we’ll see more jobs in regional communities on the chopping block.”

“The Commonwealth Government must come clean on its policy to buyback water to deliver the 450GL. Where is the openness and integrity the new government promised us?”

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