

Media Release



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

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Water buyback plan ignores evidence and farming communities

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says the Albanese Government's plan to buyback water under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan ignores all evidence of the devastation farming communities will be forced to endure.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said the announcement by Federal Water Minister Tanya Plibersek to buyback water continued to ignore the concerns of farmers about the reduction in the amount of water available to produce food.

"The Commonwealth's plan to buyback water will not only price farmers out of the water market, but it will also result in less jobs in regional communities and will increase the price of food for all Australians."

"They continue to ignore the evidence around buybacks and the impact this has on our communities."

Speaking to the ABC's 7:30 program, Minister Plibersek said she did not agree with the conclusions of the report commissioned by the Victorian Government in 2022 that highlighted the economic catastrophe caused by water buybacks.

"That report showed up to \$900 million in production would be lost in the Southern Basin under a water buyback scenario. Countless other reports have shown the devastation caused by buybacks, but it seems the government wants to ignore these facts," Mr Leahy said.

"The Minister has completely dismissed this evidence without any justification. It shows that she is not interested in evidence-based policy, she just wants to keep sweet on a political deal with South Australia."

Mr Leahy said Minister Plibersek's views on fully delivering the Basin Plan as agreed to by the states were also out of step with the facts.

"The position of the Victorian Government in 2012 was very clear. It did not, nor has it ever since, supported a 3,200GL Basin Plan. The 450GL target is additional to the 2,750GL target and is subject to a socio-economic test. Buybacks do not pass that test."

Mr Leahy said, whilst buybacks had only been announced for Queensland, NSW and the ACT, Victorian and South Australian farmers would still be impacted.

"We operate in a connected market and the 10GL earmarked to be bought out of the NSW Murray will result in less water being available to irrigators across the Southern Basin. We know it won't stop there with the government saying it will look to buyback water to recover the 450GL."

Mr Leahy saying farmers were prepared to work with government to find solutions to ensure the Basin Plan can achieve its objectives of sustaining the social, economic and environmental health of the Basin.

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“Buybacks are the cheap and nasty policy solution. Farmers are committed to working with all levels of government to deliver real outcomes for the Basin. This can be achieved by looking at the evidence in front of us and ensuring we have flexibility in the Basin Plan.”

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