

Media Release



Victorian
Farmers
Federation

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Basin Plan uncertainty threatens rural communities

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) says recent headlines that the Albanese Government is reluctant to fund Victorian Basin Plan projects due to delays caused by flooding and COVID-19 has farmers on a knife's edge.

The Basin Plan's Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) is made up of 36 projects being implemented by Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

Recently, five of the nine critical environmental works projects that would water over 8,000 hectares of high value wetlands were put on hold because the Federal Government is threatening to withhold funding because they cannot be built before June 2024.

The projects have been delayed because of COVID-19 and the lack of access because of flooding. The need to take extensive cultural heritage surveys to protect significant aboriginal sites and artefacts has also taken longer than expected.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said the VFF is very concerned the Commonwealth will use the remaining funds to simply buyback more water.

"We know that buybacks kill rural communities, drives up the price of water, reduces regional jobs and ultimately drives up the price of food and cost of living."

"The Minister is openly walking away from the Plan's SDLAM offset projects that would provide real environmental outcomes and benefits to regional communities with minimal impacts on farmers".

"Governments need to remember that farming is the lifeblood of rural communities. Our decision to grow food leads to jobs in a range of industries. The local rural stores, fencing contractors, veterinarians, machinery suppliers, machinery technicians, earthmoving contractors, even the local teacher will be teaching children from farming families."

"These projects deliver outcomes for the environment and rural communities. Mr Albanese and his Water Minister Tanya Plibersek need to understand that delivering them requires financial resources, hard work and time. "

"Victoria has been and will continue to provide the hard work. The Commonwealth government needs to provide the resources and time," Mr Leahy said.

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