

# Media Release



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## Farmer and industry leaders meet with Victorian Water Minister

Representatives from the farming community and food manufacturers have united to express their concerns about Commonwealth water buybacks meeting with the Victorian Water Minister in Echuca yesterday.

The meeting convened by the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) with Minister Harriet Shing included representatives from Northern Victoria's major food processors including SPC, Fonterra, Bega, KyValley Dairy, Australian Consolidated Milk, Katunga Fresh, Kagome and local government.

VFF President Emma Germano said the meeting highlighted the concerns about the Commonwealth Government's proposed further buyback of water and the impact this would have on food production, cost of living and local jobs.

"Farmers, local industry and the community are united in our message to ensure we have enough water to produce food, keep food prices down and keep our rural and regional communities thriving."

"The VFF values the efforts of the Victorian Government to support farming communities in Northern Victoria that have contributed so much to delivering the Murray Darling Basin Plan already."

"More water buybacks will have disastrous impacts and Minister Shing reiterated the Victorian Government's long held position of not supporting water buybacks in Victoria and ensuring the socio-economic test is upheld."

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said active talk by the Commonwealth Government to buy back up to 750GL of water would spell disaster for food production in Northern Victoria.

"With the Commonwealth actively talking of about a 750 GL shortfall in the Plan, the VFF highlighted that 450GL of this figure was a political deal to South Australia and can only be recovered if it passes the socio-economic test agreed to by the states in 2018."

"We all have to remember the 450GL was never guaranteed and the Commonwealth is trying to re-write the Basin Plan. It is subject to the test and any changes to this need unanimous agreement by the states."

"Northern Victoria has seen this story before. We know that taking more water out of our communities will result in less farmers and less jobs with the ramifications being pushed onto the whole community with increased prices at the supermarket checkout," Ms Germano said.

**ENDS**

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