

# Media Release



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## Common sense prevails for Basin Plan projects

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) welcomes the Albanese Government's decision to extend the timeframe for implementing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said common sense had prevailed following Minister Tanya Plibersek's announcement to allow efficiency projects to progress and be counted towards the Plan's targets.

"It's good to finally see some common sense. The VFF has consistently advocated for flexibility in the implementation of the Basin Plan and ensuring that efficiency projects have the time to be completed."

"Countless government reports over the past five years have told us this needed to happen. It's good to see the Commonwealth Government has finally listened to these reports and to farming communities."

Mr Leahy said despite the welcome news, northern Victorian farmers remained concerned by the Albanese Government's desire to buyback water against the 450GL up-water target.

"The VFF remains very concerned that Minister Plibersek believes there is a 750GL shortfall in the Basin Plan. The only way she can come up with that number is by including the 450GL up-water target, pushing the Basin Plan to a 3,200GL target."

"The 450GL was never guaranteed, is in addition to the 2,750GL Basin Plan target, and remains subject to the socio-economic test. The Basin Plan requires additional water recovery to have neutral or positive socio-economic outcomes."

"The socio-economic test criteria was developed by the Ministerial Council in 2018 and has been agreed to by all basin states. The agreed criteria specifies that any projects for the 450GL 'must ensure there is no direct impact on the reliability of water' and that 'projects must not directly increase the price of water'."

Mr Leahy reiterated that water buybacks breach the socio-economic test and must not occur.

"We know that water buybacks reduce the pool of water available for food production even the Australian Bureau of Agricultural Resource Economics concluded in 2020 that water buybacks will increase the price of water."

"Water buybacks to achieve the 450GL would breach the socio-economic test and legally should not occur. The Commonwealth must be held to account so no recovery of the 450GL is in breach of this criteria."

"Whilst it's a good first step to allow more time for projects to be completed, it's still a long road ahead to ensure common sense prevails in the overall Basin Plan implementation," Mr Leahy concluded.

**ENDS**

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