

Media Release



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Victorian farmers slam Basin Plan changes

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has slammed the legislative changes to the Murray-Darling Basin Plan introduced by the Albanese Government in Federal Parliament.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said the changes fly in the face of how the critical river system has been managed for years.

“This move tears up the agreement made by Basin states over 10 years ago and is trying to re-write history on what the Basin Plan actually is.”

“These changes have not been discussed with all Basin states in the same room. There is no intergovernmental agreement and this entire process has been a shameful divide and conquer approach by the Commonwealth.”

“Tanya Plibersek has torn up the agreed Basin Plan and while doing so, has destroyed over 100 years of cooperative management of the Murray River and trashed the reputation of the once trusted and world leading Murray-Darling Basin Authority.”

“The Victorian Government has rightly refused to sign up to a deal that will lead to regional communities across Northern Victoria being decimated. The Federal Government has no plan, won’t share how much water they intend to purchase and no plan where it will be purchased from,” Mr Leahy said.

Mr Leahy said the government must undertake a full analysis of the potential impacts of the changes on farming communities.

“The VFF believes the ramifications of these reforms warrants serious investigation. The Commonwealth Government must establish an independent inquiry to understand the full costs and benefits proposed by these changes.”

Mr Leahy said farming communities in Victoria’s north are on edge over the changes.

“These changes are the stuff of nightmares for northern Victorian communities.”

“They are removing the 1,500GL Water buyback limit that was established to protect regional jobs and people. They are bypassing the socio-economic test that was established for the 450GL by creating a new category of water recovery”.

“These reforms will undoubtedly drive up the price of food. The removal of 750GL of water from food production, on top of the 2,100GL already recovered so far means there will be less food produced.”

“[Independent Economic Research in 2022](#) found that the purchase of 750GL would cost the Southern Basin \$900 million in agricultural production per year and tens of thousands of jobs, destroying the farms and small country towns that depend on them. What is Plibersek’s plan for these families?”

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“While there is a slight broadening of 450GL water recovery in the Northern Basin, there are no environmental targets set for the Darling River. It is meant to be a Murray-Darling Basin Plan and it’s high time the Darling River was looked at,” Mr Leahy said.

Mr Leahy added that the notion of positive environmental outcomes is still yet to be clearly outlined by the government.

“Where is the analysis that shows where the environment will benefit? Is it Chowilla or Barmah Forest? Tanya Plibersek can’t say, because she hasn’t done the work.”

“She seems to be simply caving to Sarah Hansen Young’s demand to provide more water for South Australia to meet her cynical political needs, trashing the agreed Basin Plan in the process.”

“Victorian and New South Wales senators should be ashamed allowing themselves to be beaten up by their South Australian colleagues yet again. When will they set aside their narrow self-interest and stand up for the national, and their state’s interests,” Mr Leahy said.

“The legislative changes also allow more time for the Plan to be implemented, but this is no surprise. The Productivity Commission told the Government in 2018 that the Plan needed more time.”

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