

Media Release



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Basin Plan a political football in Senate Report

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) said today's Senate Report into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan further demonstrates that rural communities are being treated as political pawns.

VFF Water Council Chair Andrew Leahy said farmers and rural communities deserve better from decision makers on an issue that sees so much at stake.

"Supporters of the Basin Plan like to say that the delivery of environmental water to South Australia is based on the best available science. The truth is that it is all about federal politics and nothing about science and nothing about good public policy."

"Why else is Minister Plibersek ignoring the environmental catastrophe of the Darling River in which we read about on a weekly basis?"

"It's time our leaders stopped playing political games and focused on delivering solid policy that makes a real difference to people's lives," Mr Leahy said.

Mr Leahy added that it was time Federal Water Minister Tanya Plibersek listened to reputable reports that point towards huge agricultural production declines if water buybacks were to proceed in the Basin.

"The truth is that a reputable report from a leading independent firm concluded that if 750GL was purchased, we will see a \$850 million loss per year in agricultural production. That would be devastating."

"We fully support the Victorian Minister for standing firm to her Canberra counterparts and not agreeing to water buybacks."

"Minister Plibersek has consistently failed to provide any analysis backing up her claims, she is behaving like a bully. We expect competent Ministers to base their decisions on impartial analysis. Minister Plibersek is consistently failing this test."

"The Commonwealth Government is ignoring its own independent economic advice from the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics where they say '*buybacks reduce the supply of water available for irrigation, so therefore increase allocation prices.*'"

"In the past we could rely on the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to provide apolitical advice, but not anymore. Sadly, they are now just a politicised arm of the Commonwealth bureaucracy. Its proud reputation has been trashed and it must be fixed."

"It's time for a return to the days where scientists and bureaucracy provide apolitical analysis. It is only then that our Ministers can make informed decisions that are in the public's interest," Mr Leahy said.

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