



Mr. Sam Birrell MP
Federal Member for Nicholls

Media Release

New Basin Plan Doesn't Protect Regional Communities

Federal Member for Nicholls, Sam Birrell MP, says the Albanese Government has effectively torn up the Murray Darling Basin Plan leaving only a weak and meaningless commitment to minimise the social and economic impacts on basin communities.

Victoria was the only state that refused to sign up to the new plan, which extends the time for delivery of water infrastructure projects to December 2026 but also includes an additional 450GL of water for the environment to be delivered by December 2027.

“What is missing from Water Minister Tanya Plibersek’s new plan is the neutrality test established in 2018 and agreed to by all basin states, to protect basin communities,” Mr Birrell said.

“What we now have proposed is a plan that only seeks to minimise impacts, most likely through one off compensation, a pittance compared to the generational impact of lost production, jobs, economic activity and population in communities that rely on water for agriculture.”

This community destroying, corrupted new version, which will be introduced in legislation within weeks, promises funding to deliver the remaining water, and to support communities where voluntary water purchasing has flow-on impacts.

“The Victorian Government has remained steadfast, supporting the retention of the socio-economic neutrality test and opposing buybacks, which is justified by the heavy lifting our irrigation districts have already done to help deliver the bulk of the water recovery under the original plan,” Mr Birrell said.

“In contrast, NSW Premier Chris Minns, who was publicly opposed to buybacks two weeks ago has rolled over giving the Commonwealth the green light.”

Mr Birrell said buybacks will take water out of the consumptive pool and increase competition for the remaining water.

“This is a plan to slaughter our regional communities and deliver environmental water at any cost,” Mr Birrell said.

Mr Birrell said the Albanese Government doesn't have agreement with all basin states for the new plan and will be exposed to the destructive water policies of the Greens in the Senate who want guarantees the 450GL will be delivered sooner, at even greater cost to regional communities.

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