



**Mr Sam Birrell MP**  
Federal Member for Nicholls  
**Media Release**

Wednesday August 2nd, 2023

Standing Up for Local Growers and the Future of Local Produce

Federal Member for Nicholls, Sam Birrell MP, brandished a Goulburn Valley apple as he launched a blistering attack on the Labor Government's water policy for threatening the food bowl of Australia by making it harder to grow clean and healthy local produce.

Mr Birrell told Parliament on Wednesday that the Government's changes to Industrial Relations Laws and the PALM Scheme are also making it extremely difficult for local farmers to remain viable.

"Apple growers are telling me it's getting harder to produce this product because of the policies of the Labor Government," Mr Birrell told Parliament while holding a local apple.

"IR laws are making it incredibly difficult, including the changes to the PALM Scheme to run an orchard and grow healthy, clean Australian fruit," he said.

Mr Birrell called out the Minister for Water, Tanya Plibersek, for deliberating ignoring basin residents and threatening the future of Australian produce with her plans to rip an extra 450 gigalitres of water out of Basin communities.

"The Government's plan to rip a further 450 gigalitres out of the productive water pool that grows, clean Australian food threatens the viability of orchards and dairy farms in the food bowl of Australia," he told Parliament.

"I've written to the Minister on several occasions, asking... to have a briefing and to have an explanation and I don't get a personal response.

"She hasn't met with the Shadow Minister since August (2022), she won't meet with constituents whose lives this affects, the fruit growers and dairy farmers and everyone else in Basin communities.

"Do we want our kids eating clean, healthy Australian apples or do we want them imported from China?" he said.

It comes as households across Nicholls continue to struggle with the cost of living and Mr Birrell said Labor's changes to these policies are increasing the cost of produce and risking local jobs and businesses.

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