



SAM BIRRELL MP

Federal Member for Nicholls

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Media Release

Independents happy to sell out on water buybacks

Federal member for Nicholls, Sam Birrell MP says independent MPs, led by Member for Indi, Dr Helen Haines, have supported the Albanese Government's plan to launch a massive round of destructive water buybacks.

"The passage of this legislation through the House of Representatives is a sad day for people across the Murray-Darling Basin who face the economic and social destruction of their communities," Mr Birrell said.

"Dr Haines has voted for buybacks despite acknowledging how harmful they are."

"I was proud to vote against the Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023 because it was a vote against using the blunt instrument of water buybacks to achieve environmental outcomes at the expense of productive agriculture, jobs and regional communities."

"We've seen this movie before, and dairy production in the region has never recovered from the first round of Commonwealth buybacks under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan."

"Despite having contributed significantly to the success of water recovery to date, the idea that we can somehow insulate the Goulburn-Murray irrigation district from buybacks, or the impact of buybacks on the amount of water in the consumptive pool, is ill conceived."

"It is even crazier to think that the economic and social damaged caused by removing the cap on buybacks and allowing free reign can be undone as Dr Haines suggested by 'supporting impacted communities with transition funds.'"



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“The Bill still needs to navigate the Senate, and I continue to work towards a sensible outcome which includes reinstatement of a socio-economic test that prevents buybacks unless there is a proven neutral or positive impact for Basin communities.”

“That is the only way to protect communities, which is why the Nationals fought for it in the first place.”

“Hopefully the crossbench in the Senate will have more sense, and greater empathy for the people who live and work in the Basin, the people that provide food and fibre to the Nation,” he said.

Mr Birrell said the Murray-Darling Basin plan needs to be about outcomes, not targets, and that includes works and measures that help deliver environmental water with the same efficiency as productive agriculture.

“Using water buybacks will hollow out communities and Coalition MPs were told time and again while consulting across the basin that it will reduce our capacity to produce the food we need, and put our food processing industries under pressure.”

“We can’t afford Labor’s water plan and the fight isn’t over.”

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