



## SAM BIRRELL MP

Federal Member for Nicholls

### Media Release

#### Labor-Greens deal sets the buyback clock ticking for communities.

Federal Member for Nicholls, Sam Birrell MP, says the Labor-Greens deal on water is the worst outcome for farmers, manufacturers, and communities across the Murray-Darling Basin.

“It is a clear betrayal and the end of the bipartisan approach to water reform; It will hurt production, increase costs, impact jobs and the prosperity of basin communities,” Mr Birrell said.

“The Coalition fought for a strong socio-economic neutrality test to protect communities and for a cap on water buybacks, but these were rejected.”

The legislation to implement the revised Murray-Darling Basin Plan has now been passed and the clock is ticking on water buybacks.

“The Greens treat productive agriculture as a vested interest group rather than recognising that farmers across the Basin produce 40 per cent of Australia’s food and fibre and their survival is in the national interest,” Mr Birrell said.

“At a recent showcase of produce from the Basin Labor Water Minister Tania Plibersek told SPC she always bought Australian tinned tomatoes for her cooking; so why pass legislation that will make them more expensive and harder to grow?”

Under the deal the additional 450Gl of water for South Australia, which was always optional, become a core part of the plan with milestones and a timeline for recovery.

“The socio-economic impact test implemented by the Nationals in 2018 to ensure this water would only be recovered if it had a neutral or positive impact on communities has been torn up,” Mr Birrell said.



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In its place, is a weaker version inserted by crossbench Senator David Van that in approving water buybacks the Minister must consider the social and economic impact of the program on communities in the Murray-Darling Basin.

“Labor removed the socio-economic neutrality test and Water Minister Tania Plibersek has repeatedly shown she doesn’t understand and doesn’t care about the damage buybacks do to productive agriculture, industry, jobs and communities,” Mr Birrell said.

“On Wednesday I asked Minister Plibersek whether she had done economic modelling on her basin plan, and she refused to answer; instead, she displayed her total lack of understanding by suggesting that taking water out of the consumptive pool would not impact agricultural production or communities, and even suggested food prices would fall.”

“The Labor-Greens deal sets the clock ticking; open tender water buybacks are coming, and they don’t care about the impact on farmers.”

“I care, the Nationals care, we will keep fighting to protect communities; and we should all hold Labor and the Greens to account for the damage they do.”

“We saw with the protest on Monday in Shepparton that the community is also up for the fight.”

“A future Coalition Government is the only way to restore equity to the Murray-Darling Basin, but I’m really worried about how much damage this shoddy Labor-Green deal will do before then.”

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