

Friday, 20 October 2023

Media Release

AUSTRALIAN SENATOR DAVID VAN MEETS WITH MURRAY RIVER GROUP OF COUNCILS TO DISCUSS CONCERNS OVER WATER BUYBACKS

Australian Senator David Van today met with representatives of the Murray River Group of Councils (MRGC) as well as business owners and industry leaders to discuss their concerns about the potential reintroduction of water buybacks by the Australian Government.

The visit was at the invitation of MRGC Chair Cr Rob Amos as part of the MRGC's **#PushbackBuybacks** campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to urge the Australian Government and all parliamentarians to oppose the upcoming *Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023*.

If the Bill is passed, it will pave the way for the reintroduction of water buybacks from farmers to meet environmental water targets as part of the Murray River Basin Plan.

Previous experience and independent research show that water buybacks have caused a raft of negative impacts on northern Victorian communities, including \$500 million of lost productivity across the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District (GMID) each year, significant job losses and business closure.

Cr Amos said the MRGC communities want their concerns and fears to be heard, and taken seriously, by politicians of all persuasions.

"The Murray River Group of Councils appreciates Senator Van taking the time to visit our region to talk with our community about what's at stake," Cr Amos said.

"It is only through talking and listening to the people water buybacks will directly impact that the gravity of their potential reintroduction can really be understood.

"We are not only against the Australian Government reintroducing water buybacks. We are also against the government's proposal to remove the socio-economic impact test



from the Basin Plan implementation. It is akin to turning a blind eye to the broader social and economic consequences that buybacks can have on communities.

"Last time we had water buybacks, there was a 28% decrease in milk production, which contributed to the closure of a milk processing plant, we lost 1,600 jobs across the wider economy and some local sports clubs became no longer viable because water buybacks caused people to leave the area. We can't let that happen again."

The MRGC supports the environmental outcomes the Australian Government aims to achieve through the Basin Plan but believes there are better alternatives to buybacks. As part of the visit, Senator Van visited Gunbower Forest to view firsthand one of the water-saving and efficiency projects underway as part of the Victorian Murray Floodplain Restoration Project.

Senator Van also met with dairy farmers and industry representatives at a dairy farm in Tongala to discuss the devastating impacts water buybacks would have on their industry.

For more information and to sign the petition, visit <http://www.mrgc.com.au/pushbackbuybacks/>.

<ends>

Media enquiries: Campaspe Shire Council Communications Team via email comms@campaspe.vic.gov.au or phone (03) 5483 6985.

About the Murray River Group of Councils

The Murray River Group of Councils (MRGC) comprises of six councils in northern Victoria, Mildura and Swan Hill Rural City Councils and Loddon, Gannawarra, Campaspe and Moira Shire Councils.



LGA	POPULATION 2021	LGA	AREA
Mildura	56,972	Mildura	22,083 Km2
Campaspe	38,735	Loddon	6,696 Km2
Moira	30,522	Swan Hill	6,115 Km2
Swan Hill	21,403	Campaspe	4,519 Km2
Gannawarra	10,638	Moira	4,047 Km2
Loddon	7,759	Gannawarra	3,735 Km2

Water is the lifeblood of our communities.

Agricultural commodities in the MRGC region have combined a value in excess of \$4 billion. Together, the agriculture and food manufacturing sectors account for, a third of all economic output, 43% of all local expenditure and one in four jobs in our region. Around half of all farm businesses in our region rely on irrigation.

The rivers, floodplains, lakes and wetlands of northern Victoria have enormous environmental value and are fundamental to our regional identity. Our region is home to four Ramsar wetlands: Hattah-Kulkyne, Kerang Wetlands, Gunbower and Barmah.

Our communities depend on a healthy Murray River system for drinking water and for recreation. Our tourism industry relies in large part on a healthy Murray River system as the single main attraction for the region.

All these depend on the careful management of the Murray Darling Basin water resources in partnership with Basin communities.



Mildura Rural City Council



SWAN HILL
Rural City Council



GANNAWARRA
Shire Council



LODDON
SHIRE



Campaspe
Shire Council



moira
SHIRE