

Media Release

The Hon Richard Wynne MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Housing
Acting Minister for Water



Thursday, 29 April 2021

COMMONWEALTH FAILS TO ADDRESS BASIN SHORTFALL AGAIN

The Commonwealth Government has again failed to address the central issue in delivering the remainder of the Murray Darling Basin Plan by 2024.

Acting Victorian Water Minister Richard Wynne told a virtual meeting of Murray Darling Basin Ministers today that it is widely recognised that states won't meet the deadline of 2024 to deliver all of the 605 gigalitres worth of projects.

Victoria is involved in 22 projects – 19 of which are either complete or on track to be completed by 2024.

Three remaining projects need significant community input, consultation and co-design – these are complex projects and cannot be delivered in a cooperative way with communities by 2024.

The Commonwealth has again failed to acknowledge this risk and take any action to mitigate it. Despite Minister Keith Pitt reiterating that he will not undertake buybacks, this remains a real concern for Victorian communities until changes are made to Commonwealth legislation.

Victoria supported the reset of projects where that helps delivery but could not agree to a compromise that didn't include legislative and other action on flexibility around the deadline, the mix of projects to be delivered and the threat of buybacks.

Despite the Commonwealth again refusing to acknowledge this issue, Victoria will continue to work to deliver the Plan and expects other states to do the same. Victoria agreed to the publication of a dashboard tracing the progress on projects, saying communities deserve transparency in this process.

Minister Wynne also raised Victoria's opposition to any further on-farm efficiency projects, saying they won't meet the socio-economic test agreed to by all Ministers. Victoria also raised issues relating to the Commonwealth's \$40 million fund for Aboriginal water, saying the funding should be used in a way supported by Traditional Owners.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Water Richard Wynne

"The Commonwealth is again failing to deliver confidence and certainty for communities that have already given up so much in order to deliver the Plan"

"Victoria will continue to work to meet its obligations under the Plan, but we won't ride roughshod over communities to deliver projects that need proper consultation and community co-design."

"As the Productivity Commission found, there should be flexibility around these projects so they can be delivered for the benefit of the environment."