

# Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP

Minister for Water

Minister for Police and Emergency Services



**DELIVERING  
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

Friday, 31 May 2019

## WATER MARKET IMPROVEMENTS FOR NORTHERN IRRIGATORS

Significant changes to the way water is managed in Northern Victoria have been flagged today in a bid to support struggling irrigators and dairy farmers facing dry conditions and high prices for water and fodder.

Minister for Water Lisa Neville and Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes attended a dairy industry roundtable in Tatura to hear first-hand from the community, local farmers and the water sector, and discuss potential changes to water market rules and transparency.

Knowing who is buying and selling water is an increasingly important issue for irrigators. Minister Neville has asked her department to look at the options and benefits of a completely transparent water trading system, to provide confidence that the market is working for irrigators and not being distorted.

The Minister has also asked for inter-valley trade rules to be reviewed, following concerns about high volumes of trade and environmental damage to the Goulburn. This work will be completed by the end of July.

The Andrews Labor Government has recently been working on how to manage increasing demand from the Lower Murray region, with advice expected to be provided by the end of June. This includes potentially curbing new extraction from the River, which has been called for by various industry bodies.

With irrigators set to receive their share of recovered water at the end of the Connections Project, a consultative committee will be set up mid-year to recommend the best mechanism to distribute the irrigators share. The committee will be chaired by former Victorian MP and VFF President Paul Weller, and include representatives from the irrigation sector.

This builds on the continued successful reset of the Connections Project which is on track and on budget to deliver both Stages 1 and 2 by October 2020. For the region, this means connecting landowners to the modernised system, generating significant water savings for the environment and a valuable economic boost.

The Labor Government is also providing assistance through a \$45 million drought package, making extra water available where possible and ensuring flexible hardship programs are accessible through water corporations.

An extra \$2.7 million announced today will further support farmers experiencing dry seasonal conditions in Northern Victoria with more financial counsellors on the ground, the re-establishment of Rural Skills Connect to train farmers off the farm, and further infrastructure grants to make farms more resilient to future dry conditions.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Water Lisa Neville

*“Today was a great opportunity to sit down and discuss with local farmers how we can work together to support the dairy and irrigation industries through ongoing dry conditions and high prices.”*

*“Getting the water market transparency and trading rules right is a key part of that, along with making as much water as possible available to irrigators in Northern Victoria in a way that protects the surrounding environment.”*

### Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

*“We know there are a lot of farmers doing it tough in Northern Victoria – that’s why we’re listening to the local community and industry leaders and working with them to plan for the long-term future of the dairy industry.”*

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