



District Council 2 and 3 Regional Update



Over the past two weeks, your dairy and water leaders from DC 2 and 3 have been involved in the following activities.

Federal Water Plan:

Richard Anderson continues to discuss revised draft legislation with the VFF and Government officials. Consultation between the State and Federal Governments continues with Victoria sending further information to Canberra. At this stage Victoria has not signed up to the plan despite Canberra's deadline.

The VFF will be working to ensure that when Victoria signs up to the plan an additional \$3.5b is allocated to Northern Victoria to finish off the irrigation infrastructure upgrades and the on-farm works required to capture the full benefits of this investment.

Foodbowl Modernisation Project:

While the VFF welcomes the State Government's investment to upgrade irrigation infrastructure, throughout negotiations with the Foodbowl Group and State Government it has remained opposed to a funding deal which would see water going to Melbourne. When it became apparent that the deal would include some water savings being allocated to Melbourne the VFF had two choices. Negotiate some wins and safeguards for irrigators or do nothing. The VFF took the view that to do nothing would have been irresponsible. Richard Anderson and Geoff Akers were able to gain assurances from Ministers Thwaites and Brumby that Melbourne only gets water from savings and remains out of the permanent or temporary water market and that water savings going back to irrigators be accrued as additional water entitlements. The VFF has received confirmation of these assurances in writing from the Premier.

Lake Mokoan:

The VFF met with DSE and Lake Mokoan irrigators to review the alternative proposal. Negotiations to clarify the proposal continue.

Annual Conference Outcomes:

- **GMO Policy:** UDV members reversed the anti-GM policy and supported farmers being given the choice of GM technology in the dairy industry. The Australian Dairy Industry Council also has adopted this position.
- **Anthrax Compensation:** UDV members voted that the UDV office investigate compensation for farmers for deaths of stock due to anthrax.
- **VFF Water Council Formed:** Members strongly endorsed the increased profile of water within the organisation and adopted that a water council be formed rather than remaining as a Water Resources Committee. The Water Council will have regional representatives from across the state and have the capacity to form taskforces and develop its own budget.
- **Big Buffalo & William Hovell Dam:** VFF members supported that the VFF lobby for the development of Big Buffalo dam as well as extending William Hovell dam.
- **Water Tagging:** VFF members supported that any water transferred to another area of urban supply, be subject to the same allocation restrictions as where the water originated from.
- **Victorian Irrigators Council:** VFF members overwhelmingly rejected the resolution that the VFF join the Victorian Irrigators Council. The VFF is the State's peak water body and is recognized by all levels of Government.

We will continue to keep you informed of our lobbying activities with regular inserts in Country News. If you want further information please contact your branch or district council representatives.