



**Victorian Farmers Federation**

*United Dairyfarmers of Victoria*

## **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:**

Last week the Federal Government announced they would use their constitutional powers to take control of the Murray-Darling Basin without the support of the Victorian Government and the VFF.

This decision has created much angst and confusion and no-one is quite sure what the legislation will look like. There are suggestions that there will be significant changes to the legislation as a result of the Federal power grab.

Prime Minister Howard has suggested that given Victoria does not support the plan they will not receive any funding for off-farm infrastructure upgrades. The Federal Government is also suggesting that the Murray Darling Basin Authority will function without Victoria.

The Victorian State Government is implying that as a result of this Federal power grab, the Commonwealth will then want to privatize the management of water in the region.

It seems much of the debate has become politicised as we near a Federal Election and the impacts on irrigators in the region has been forgotten by politicians.

The VFF is working to uncover the detail of the legislation and its impacts and has written to the Federal Government outlining concerns.

### **Foodbowl Modernisation Project:**

The VFF has questioned the credibility of the water savings hoped to be achieved by the State Government under the Foodbowl Project. The VFF's estimates are based on figures provided by DSE staff which highlights that a modernisation of the entire GMID would provide 336 GL of high reliability water savings. Depending on climate change and impacts on inflows, additional savings from low reliability water would range from 0-80 gigalitres. This is 114GL short of the 450GL the State Government was hoping to achieve.

The VFF has maintained that water currently being used in productive agricultural use, must continue to be available to farmers following the upgrade and not lost through more accurate metering. Unfortunately with less water savings possible this leaves farmers receiving a smaller share of water savings and potentially less than what they are currently receiving.

Richard Anderson continues to discuss these issues with Minister Thwaites and Senior DSE staff.

### **Water Use Licenses:**

The DC's are urging all farmers to carefully examine the details outlined on their Water Use Licenses. Some confusion has been created as no groundwater usage is included on the License. This is due to groundwater not being unbundled.

### **Campaspe Groundwater Management Plan:**

G-MW's Campaspe Groundwater Advisory Committee met last week. Richard Anderson was recently appointed to the Committee that is reviewing the Groundwater Plan that is due to expire next year.

*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.*