

**Media Release**  
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### **Sheed calls on Federal Coalition to support Private Members' Bill**

Independent Member for the Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed has called on Federal Environment Minister The Hon. Sussan Ley MP and all other coalition members to support the three National Party members in the federal parliament in their efforts to get more water on the market for farmers.

In December, NSW Senator Perin Davey, Member for Mallee Anne Webster and Member for Nicholls Damian Drum flagged introducing legislation that would allow the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to make available some of its water to irrigators. The draft bill has now been prepared and community consultations on its terms are taking place.

"While it is puzzling to consider that these National Party members are proposing to introduce a private member's bill to unlock environmental water for my region's farmers, given that they are members of the government, it is nevertheless important that the bill be supported," Ms Sheed said.

Ms Sheed noted that Minister Ley had recently refused a request from Victorian Water Minister Lisa Neville to release environmental water.

"Minister Neville has also called on Minister Ley to follow this sensible approach and was rebuffed," Ms Sheed said.

"The federal environment minister said she was unable to comply with the request due to legislation, and yet, her own colleagues are proposing to change that. It's time the minister listened to them and made this private member's bill official government policy."

"We are experiencing one of the worst droughts on record. Normally, the environment would have little to no water under these circumstances. Perversely, the Murray Darling Basin Plan requires farmers to suffer unnecessarily while water is locked away and used on such practices as flooding the Barmah Choke or going down to be evaporated out of the Lower Lakes.

"This is just wrong and the impact on our dairy industry in the Goulburn Murray region has been devastating.

"It seems that some National Party members at least can clearly see the damage that is being done and it is time they were listened to by their own colleagues.

“It would be very disappointing if this draft legislation were not supported by their coalition colleagues as it would be certainly seen as a stunt by those National Party members who are in very vulnerable electorates.

“They are members of a governing party – why aren’t they being listened to inside their own party room?”

ENDS

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