
Media Release

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Victorian Water Minister claims other jurisdictions “in breach of the law” on water

Independent Member for Shepparton District Suzanna Sheed questioned the Victorian Minister for Water Lisa Neville this week in Parliament and received an emphatic response that other governments and their departments were not playing by the rules.

“At the ministerial council meeting of water ministers in December 2018 a much lauded agreement was reached by ministers establishing the basis upon which the additional 450 gigalitres of up-water would be achieved.

“The agreement was that there would be no negative impacts on our rural communities,” Ms Sheed said.

“It is now apparent that the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, the federal one, has continued to seek expressions of interest to carry out on-farm projects—at least eight of them are on their own website—primarily in South Australia and without regard to the terms of the agreement, indeed in breach of the agreement.”

In response to the Question Without Notice, Minister Neville said she would be taking the matter to her state and federal counterparts.

“I am absolutely aware of the proposals, particularly from South Australia, that are absolutely in breach of the agreement that was reached in 2018. In my view they are in breach of the law. The agreement is actually very clear: you cannot deliver this water if it has a negative impact, and we know that that sort of water recovery, those sorts of projects, will continue to have a negative impact,” Minister Neville said before going on to criticise the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

“I have raised this issue with the federal minister, both in writing and verbally, and I will continue to do that. It is my view that the federal department is out of step with the federal minister on this and that the federal department continues to run their own agenda.”

In light of the recent federal ministerial reshuffle, Ms Sheed called on the new Federal Minister for Water Mr Keith Pitt to bring his bureaucrats and South Australian counterparts into line.

“What’s the point of even having a set of rules, of a Murray Darling Basin Plan, of a Federal Water Act, if the only ones who play by the rules are the ones who lose out? Victoria is once again losing out because we obey the law while others flout it. It is the responsibility of the Victorian government to police the terms of that 2018 agreement and demand compliance from the other parties,” Ms Sheed said.

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