David Farley MP
Member for Farrer

Buybacks force job cuts in Farrer

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Water held back by the Albanese Labor government should be released to irrigators in the Murray Darling Basin to arrest further job losses.

Member for Farrer David Farley said a decision by major local employer SunRice to slash working hours for its workforce in Leeton and Deniliquin showed Labor and the Greens had gone too far with water buybacks.

“Water has become prohibitively expensive in the Basin thanks to buybacks, and this is despite the fact that more than enough water has been recovered for environmental flows under the Basin Plan,” Mr Farley said.

“Employers like SunRice can’t maintain their workforces at current levels if they have no crops to process, and this is a direct result of water prices going higher thanks to government buybacks. This isn’t the first time this has happened; in 2019, the company was forced to cut 100 jobs in the Riverina thanks to water reform policies.”

Mr Farley said that last week he’d asked the Commonwealth to release surplus environmental water – as per the rules – to irrigators in time for spring planting.

“Even unions were in Canberra last week lobbying for more water in order to protect jobs in Farrer,” he said.

“SunRice has indicated this would be a positive step. They’ve made it clear the Basin Plan is not meeting its legislated requirements to optimise social and economic outcomes. Labor and the Greens don’t care about those outcomes; it’s obvious they have no regard for workers and communities in the Basin.

“The Federal Government has a chance to stop this buyback bungle and restore confidence to Farrer and irrigators across the country. Today’s announcement by SunRice shows that need is more critical than ever.

“One Nation’s policy is to restore the balance to the Basin Plan that was lost when Labor and the Greens teamed up in 2023 to take more water from irrigators and river communities.”

ENDS