



**Media Release  
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**Allocation of 2GL water to irrigators flies in the face of Government policy and legislative commitments to support access to water for Traditional Owners.**

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations backs objections by Victorian Traditional Owners regarding the recent announcement that 2GL of water savings will flow to irrigators and rejects the Victorian Government's statement that these water savings were already allocated. Acting Minister for Water, Richard Wynne, announced that this 2GL of water savings was achieved in addition to the target of 225GL under Stage 1 of the Goulburn Murray Water Connection Project.

***Taungurung Land and Waters Council CEO, Matthew Burns, says: "Allocating water to irrigators without consulting Traditional Owners is a violation of the Government's policy and legislative reforms to incorporate Aboriginal Victorian's participation in water planning. These reforms are intended to address our sovereign rights and interests, including access to water for cultural and economic purposes."***

On 7 April 2021, the Managing Director of Goulburn-Murray Water Charmaine Quick applied to the Acting Minister for Water, Richard Wynne, for an amendment to the Goulburn and Murray Bulk Entitlements. This amendment is yet to be signed off by Mr Wynne. The definition of an irrigator's share of water savings within the draft amendment indicates the Acting Minister has power to use discretion when allocating the additional water savings however, the draft amendment seeks to limit this to eligible delivery shareholders.

Delivery shares are linked to land title. In a recently launched foundational report, *Cultural Water for Cultural Economies* ([final water report.pdf](#)), Traditional Owners and First Nations Groups identified that land access is a major barrier to water justice. Restricting access to this water to eligible delivery shareholders directly excludes access to water by Traditional Owners. A copy of this Government funded report has been provided to the Acting Minister.

The Acting Minister's response is in direct contrast to the Victorian Government's commitment to "notify Traditional Owners when opportunities to access water entitlements arise" in accordance with Action 6.3 in *Water for Victoria* ([Water-Plan-strategy2.pdf](#)).

***Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation CEO, Rodney Carter, says: "The decision was short-sighted and a breach of the good faith with which First Nations people have been participating in the foundational work to support these commitments, and instead reinforces the scepticism that meaningful water reform will occur."***

As a Victorian Traditional Owner reflected in the *Cultural Water for Cultural Economies* report, "...the amount of talk, meetings, planning, with nothing ever coming through to fruition. Each time nothing comes through, it kills you a little bit."



The Federation suggests that the Victorian Government has several options available to restore good faith and immediately activate its commitment to promises made to Traditional Owners including:

- That the State of Victoria partners with Traditional Owners to create an entitlement program, with an initial commitment that matches the Federal Government's \$40 million commitment and ensures that Traditional Owners are the decision makers for the best use of that water across all its descriptions, which includes farming.
- Immediately advance transfers of commitments in unallocated water in Southern Victoria.
- Demonstrate commitment to transition decision-making under the Victorian Environmental Water management framework for Victorian environmental water holdings across the state to Victorian Traditional Owners.

***Federation CEO, Paul Paton, says: "The Government needs to come back to the table and demonstrate that it is genuine about self-determined water reform. This situation begs the question, what does self-determination mean to this Government when activated and applied?"***

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