

**IMPACTS OF THE WATER AMENDMENT (RESTORING OUR RIVERS) ACT
2023 ON NSW REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

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I am writing to express my strong opposition to the federal government's current water buyback policy. This approach poses significant threats to the sustainability of Southern Riverina farmers, local communities, and the broader Australian food supply.

Economic Impact on Farmers and Communities

The implementation of water buybacks is poised to escalate water costs for Southern Riverina farmers. As water entitlements are purchased and removed from agricultural use, the reduced availability intensifies competition among farmers, driving up prices. This surge in water costs directly translates to increased operational expenses for farmers, many of whom are already navigating the challenges of rising living costs and economic pressures.

The ripple effect of heightened water prices extends beyond individual farmers. Local economies, deeply intertwined with agriculture, face potential downturns. As farming operations become less viable due to inflated water costs, there is a risk of reduced agricultural output. This decline can lead to job losses in farming and related industries, decreased local spending, and a contraction of community services. Such economic strain undermines the vitality of rural communities, exacerbating challenges in regions already confronting economic hardships.

Impact on Food Production and Security

The escalation of water costs inevitably leads to higher expenses in food production. Farmers may be compelled to pass these costs onto consumers, resulting in increased food prices nationwide. More alarmingly, sustained financial pressures could force farmers to cease operations, diminishing the production of Australian-grown food. This scenario threatens national food security, increasing reliance on imports and exposing consumers to global market volatilities.

Conclusion

The federal government's water buyback policy presents substantial risks to farmers, local communities, and Australia's food security. I urge policymakers to reconsider this approach and develop strategies that safeguard both our environment and the livelihoods of those who depend on agriculture.