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NIC Calls on State Governments to Stop Hoarding Water

The National Irrigators' Council CEO, Tom Chesson said State Governments could do much more to save jobs as the impacts of low inflows and the successive 'historic' water reforms erode social and economic resilience in the Murray Darling Basin.

"The Victorian Government could immediately direct Melbourne Water to use allocations attached to the 75,000 megalitres of water entitlements it owns in the MDB to underwrite jobs in the Southern Basin.

"Melbourne's storages are healthy leading into summer and its' water supplies are further underpinned by a desalination plant that is grossly underutilised.

"We have a very short window to get summer crops into the ground. The bulk of the summer crops need to be in the ground now. If the crops don't go in then jobs will be lost.

"Underpinning jobs in the Southern Basin by using Melbourne Waters current allocations will not impact on the environment nor does it jeopardise Melbourne's water supplies.

"The Weekly Times is reporting the Victorian Agriculture Minister as saying, "Premier Daniel Andrews had asked her and Water Minister Lisa Neville to co-ordinate the Government's response to the rapidly deteriorating season, which is likely to come in the form of financial support and guidance."

"Providing water in the next fortnight means less taxpayer funded micky mouse rock painting schemes and more real meaningful jobs that will provide a return to taxpayers and the communities.

Mr Chesson said there were a number of other cities and towns in Victoria including Bendigo, and Ballarat who held water that could be used to underpin jobs and these should be urgently investigated.

"The ACT Governments which was allowed to build a new dam in the darkest depths of the Millennium drought twenty times bigger than the one it replaced holds water in the Murrumbidgee Valley which it currently doesn't need and it could put this to good use underpinning jobs.

"South Australia has a desalination plant sitting idle which could be used to take pressure of consumptive water users.

"The Basin State governments could find in excess of 100,000 megalitres of water immediately to help underpin economic resilience in the Southern Basin, without impacting on the MDB Plan," Mr Chesson said.

Media Contact: Tom Chesson 0418 415597