

Thursday 10 December 2009

## **WATER STRATEGY FAILS FOOD BOWL**

Shadow Minister for Country Water Resources Peter Walsh today questioned whether Victoria's northern region can continue to be Australia's food bowl under the Brumby Government's rural water strategy.

Responding to the release of the Northern Region Sustainable Water Strategy yesterday, Mr Walsh said the Brumby Government was doing untold damage to the region.

"Within another five years, the majority of the water rights previously held in the region will be traded out of the food producing sector of the region to other areas or the Commonwealth," Mr Walsh said.

"It is the stated aim of those controlling the government-owned state enterprise Northern Victoria Irrigation Renewal Project (NVIRP) to close down at least 60 per cent of the irrigation infrastructure of the region.

"The Brumby Government acknowledges the region contributes about \$3.26 billion a year to the Victorian economy, yet it is in the process of draining the food producing sector of water.

"Its latest strategy does very little to halt that exodus of water from northern Victoria."

Mr Walsh said the report showed up to 30 per cent of farming properties in the Sunraysia area were no longer producing food and the water had been sold off.

"This decline cannot continue without having a serious impact on Victoria's ability to produce food and causing job losses in our regions," Mr Walsh said.

**Media contact: Peter Walsh 0428 507 541**