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## Media Release

### Water solution a must for region

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The people of Ballarat and the Central Highlands have been warned not to allow their water supply priorities to be lost or ignored in consideration of a wider water strategy for central Victoria or they could pay dearly.

A high-powered task group of business and community leaders is campaigning for an urgent and long-lasting water supply solution for Ballarat and region.

Established through the Committee for Ballarat, the task group is adamant the city, the region and its people must ultimately decide their water supply priorities.

It has encouraged close consideration of the State Government's recently released Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy and urged all interested parties to attend information sessions in Ballarat on Monday.

The sessions are scheduled for the Trench Room at Ballarat Town Hall at 3.30 pm and 6.30 pm.

Task group chairman Noel Coxall said the specific solutions for Ballarat and region "preferred by the people who live, work and do business here" must be heard and understood.

"It appears to us that with the swipe of a pen the plan for Lal Lal water to be returned to Ballarat and the Central Highlands has been pushed aside. We will want some clarification of that," Mr Coxall said.

"We understand long standing legal agreements say that when Ballarat needs all the Lal Lal water it is entitled to then it can take it. What has happened to that agreement?"

Mr Coxall said the task group was also concerned the draft Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy suggested consumers would bear the brunt of the massive costs associated with the infrastructure proposals it contained.



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“Governments, either Federal or State, cannot seriously believe that, given the enormity of the projects proposed, there would not be taxpayer funding available.

“We would like to see an injection of funding now into Central Highlands Water to undertake and complete the feasibility studies required on the options contained in the strategy.

“We will be urging the State to give a solid commitment now to the majority of capital funding to either the Geelong – Melbourne or the Cairn Curran link, while seeking to secure any available Federal funding.

“The local community, on its own, should not be expected to absorb what will be major tariff increases to fund projects that contribute to the economic and social growth of Victoria and which are also significant in a national context.”

Mr Coxall said the task group was preparing its own submission in response to the Central Region Sustainable Water Strategy.

Water is the most fundamentally important challenge facing the people of this region, with the potential to influence major business investments and decisions people make about where they choose to live.

“It is a matter that has to be attended to urgently and we have to get it right now or we will pay a high price in the future,” he said.

Further comment can be obtained by calling Mr Coxall on **ph 0418 508383**

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