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Zero allocation could be lifted

There is enough water in the River Murray to cancel plans to cut irrigation allocations to zero from July 1, according to the State's peak representative body for irrigators.

The South Australian Murray Irrigators this week received independent scientific information from the Murray Darling Association that showed that the State's 3500 irrigators could receive at least 5 percent of their 2007-2008 water allocations from July 1.

SAMI chairman, Mr Ian Zadow, said modelled annual inflows provided by the MDA indicated that the State currently has enough water in the river system to abandon its zero allocation plans without affecting domestic water supply.

"We are very angry that we are being told zero, when the river system is more than capable of providing us all with at least a 5 percent allocation for the next irrigation season.

"It might not sound a lot, but it could be the difference between surviving and closing down.

"It will give thousands of people in irrigation communities right along the river hope and something to work with."

Mr Zadow said imposing a zero allocation was clearly taking action to an unnecessary extreme.

"We need to be working together to overcome this drought, but that is not happening.

"It has been estimated that a zero allocation will cost the State \$188 million in gross regional product, but it will be millions more as the ramifications widen.

"Imposing a zero allocation should be a last resort. That is not the case at the moment and the proposal is tantamount to turning your back on many rural communities throughout South Australia."

Mr Zadow said the irrigation industry was being burdened with almost the entire responsibility of supposedly saving the State from drought, while city-based industries were not incurring any water restrictions and domestic users were experiencing meaningless cuts.

"If the situation is so dire the whole State should already be experiencing much tighter water restrictions.

"Unfortunately it would appear that drought management decisions are being based on political priorities instead of what is in the best interests of all us.

"Unfortunately many people will not realise this until irrigators cannot produce anything and everyone is paying three and four times more for their weekly shopping at the supermarket.

"On behalf of all irrigation communities along the river, SAMI calls on the State Government to rise above politics and immediately announce at least a five percent allocation for irrigators as of July 1, 2007.

"We would hope with significant inflows during the winter that this figure will continue to increase in the months ahead."

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