



S.A.M.I.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MURRAY IRRIGATORS INCORPORATED
ABN: 42 221 151 883

Assistant Executive Officer

Telephone

08 8541 2165

12A Peake Tce, Waikerie SA 5330

www.samurrayirrigators.org.au

Fax **08 8541 3955**

E-mail **qsddpm@riverland.net.au**

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There is still much confusion about what the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan will require of irrigators according to the South Australian Murray Irrigators Group.

It was just one of the points raised at an open enquiry held at Mannum last week by the Natural Resources Committee which comprises members from all parties of the SA Parliament.

SAMI chair Caren Martin addressed the committee and made a submission to the enquiry, highlighting the issues which concerned the group.

"There is confusion around the use of long-term annual averages and what the community knows as entitlement and the ability to compare the two," she said.

"The uncertainty around what this plan is actually requiring of irrigators is hard to nail down.

"Regardless of the detail, a Basin Plan is important to bring together the management of one interactive catchment."

Ms Martin said all irrigators are equal and this right should be protected and cherished within the abilities of the management of the Murray Darling Basin.

"The construction of the barrages in the 1940s is an engineering legacy that we cannot turn back from and nor should we," she said.

"Dams and locks were built to serve the purpose of a reliable water supply for consumption and navigation.

"Looking forward, enhancement of this infrastructure is needed to allow communities to embrace the management of the environment and allow it to sustain us through the good times and the bad."

Ms Martin said the proposed Basin Plan relies heavily on modelled and predicted outcomes rather than actual recorded and scientifically robust data.

"This does not provide the general public with any tangible and measured comparison to accept the modelled predictions as fact," she said.

"What the public want and expect the Basin Plan to provide is known volumes and frequency of flow events within the physical constraints of the system."

Ms Martin said the Australian culture and the realities of historical circumstances have been neglected in the proposed Basin Plan.

"Local knowledge has been selectively rebuffed throughout the water reform process and this has had very real long-term social and cultural impact on regional communities along the Murray," she said.

"Climate change has not been adequately defined or addressed in the proposed Murray Darling Basin Plan."

SAMI also has concerns about the method of devising sustainable diversion limits.

"It is not fair and equitable for a number of statistical and socially complex reason," Ms Martin said.

"South Australian historic responsible and sustainable management practices have not been taken into account when determining SDLs.

"If the triple bottom line rhetoric of the water reform process is to be believed then the plan needs to take on a more human face."

The Natural Resources Committee which comprises members from all parties of the SA Parliament and will receive submissions from interested people via:

Patrick Dupont

Executive Officer - Natural Resources Committee
Parliament of South Australia
GPO Box 572 ADELAIDE SA 5001
ph (08) 8237 9442 fax (08) 8231 9130
www.parliament.sa.gov.au

Membership of the Committee is as follows.

Membership

Hon Steph Key MP, **Presiding Member**
Mr Geoff Brock MP
Hon Robert Brokenshire MLC
Hon John Dawkins MLC
Mrs Robyn Geraghty MP
Hon Gerry Kendelaars MLC
Mr Lee Odenwalder MP
Mr Don Pegler MP
Mr Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP

ENDS

Media enquiries:

Caren Martin on 0400 741 533.