



S.A.M.I.

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The chair of South Australian Murray Irrigators Incorporated said she was left "gobsmacked" by a Murray Darling Basin Authority's industry briefing.

Caren Martin was invited to Canberra last week to attend the session which discussed the science and methodology behind the next release of the Draft Basin Plan.

"I hoped that a sensible and integral draft could prevail considering irrigation communities have waited patiently for the process to unfold," she said.

"The brief left participants gobsmacked.

"After so much administration and interviewing of community members, the authority staff presented a scenario which had barely changed from the original draft."

But it was the socio-economic aspect which Ms Martin said had not been taken on board by the authority, despite extension consultation with the basin communities.

"The socio-economic work was ideologically based and cringe-worthy in its assumption that a 30 per cent cut in the consumptive use of water would equate to only a two per cent decline in productivity," she said.

"The errors assumptions and omissions were astounding.

"For the administration budget that this project has received, many were left asking themselves if anything had actually been achieved."

Ms Martin said the information provided at the briefing outlined that 890GL was currently held by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.

In the period from 2012 – 2015 there will be a further 950GL 'gap' purchased and efficiencies realised, before a reassessment on a third round of 950GL by 2019.

"If these volumes are not recovered then the legislation lies open for compulsory acquisition to occur," she said.

"Social and secondary impacts have not been acknowledged or addressed and therefore regional communities across the basin are in for a rough ride. Especially in South Australia where the inequities are three fold.

Ms Martin said while there had been extensive research around river regulation and capacity management, it was only a small diamond in a very big and expensive rough.

"The prognosis as things currently stand is not good," she said.

"Irrigators and other state water entitlement holders are considered at risk and the repercussions of that are being largely ignored or denied.

"The Authority has failed in its independence as it has inaccurate starting figures in a number of catchments and refuses to acknowledge the discrepancy."

"The inconsistencies between water entitlement holders, State and Federal Governments and the Authority is very much still there but it has been further complicated with another layer of ideological spin bureaucracy and policy."

"All stakeholders need to know where the starting line is or the plan and water reform is doomed to fail."

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