

Hanson-Young's basin strategy equals shut down of Barossa & Renmark Irrigation

National Irrigators Council CEO, Steve Whan, has described a media release by Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young proposing to move disallowance of Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Measures (SDLAM), as a baffling misunderstanding of the basin plan.

Steve Whan said, "no one is surprised that the Greens would move disallowance of anything to do with the Murray Darling basin plan. After all, they opposed the plan in the first place.

"However, Senator Hanson-Young's latest release makes me wonder if she has read it.

"The projects the Senator is opposing are supply measures that will improve the delivery of water to the environment. They include, for instance, saving some of the 44GL per year that evaporates from the man-made Menindee lakes and, instead, sending it to South Australia.

"These projects mean better environmental outcomes, achieved without further damaging irrigation communities and the capacity to grow the fresh vegies, fruit and nuts, grapes, rice and cotton that all of us like to consume.

"Senator Hanson-Young doesn't seem to know that the SDL adjustment process (also known as down-water) was an integral part of the original basin plan – agreed by all governments including South Australia in 2012.

"Senator Hanson-Young's comment that *'this is an admission that the 605GL of allocated water hasn't been going to the environment'* is really odd. Consistent with the plan, as agreed in 2012, this 605GL has not yet been recovered, so it can't be lost. And it really is insulting people's intelligence to accuse the MDBA of not being able to figure out where it has gone.

"I wonder why Senator Hanson-Young has not told South Australians that if she succeeds in disallowing these projects South Australian irrigators will have to give up another 40GL of water. That is the equivalent of shutting down Barossa and Renmark Irrigation.

"This is about 9,200 mainly family farmers who produce much of our food, natural fibre and all of South Australia's grapes.

"Irrigators would be very happy to have a sensible conversation with the Greens on the basin plan. Our members want a healthy river environment along with healthy regional communities. But we have to start with facts and a bit of respect not this insulting fictional version."

Media Contact: Steve Whan 0429 780 883
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