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Political plan lacks research and science

As more information comes to light it is increasingly obvious that developing the Murray-Darling Basin Plan lacked the research, science and scrutiny that Australian taxpayers would expect.

It was developed for political purposes and as a consequence is not providing the environmental outcomes, community wellbeing or economic stability and certainty that were promised.

The community based Speak Up Campaign says it is surely time to take stock of what has occurred under the Basin Plan and make the necessary adjustments to support impacted communities.

Spokesperson Vicki Meyer said the fact scientists are still questioning how much water should be recovered, and failing to take into account numerous impacting factors, is indisputable proof that effective planning was not carried out in the early stages.

“In past weeks we have had a former Murray-Darling Basin Authority scientist stating he had 30 minutes to come up with a water recovery number and a CSIRO scientist who claims the MDBA ‘interfered’ with his research and compromised his scientific integrity. This is unacceptable.

“Adding to the integrity issues at the MDBA is its absolute refusal to accept community damage from the plan.

“We now have community leaders continuing their attacks on the MDBA for failing to acknowledge the plan’s damage to regional communities which rely on food and fibre production.

“Berrigan Shire General Manager Rowan Perkins – one of our state’s most experienced local government leaders in the heart of the food bowl – this week described the impact on communities as “cruel”, said the MDBA’s constant attitude of ‘nothing to see here’ contradicts its own findings, and expressed disappointment that the Federal Government had inflicted damage on communities then ‘shamefully removed the support that it had promised’.

“I suspect even in the MDBA they know this is a botched plan that jumps from one crisis to another. But they’re all getting their massive bureaucratic salaries

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from the government's \$13 billion pie, so it appears to become a 'who cares about anyone else' scenario," Ms Meyer said.

She says it is imperative the government steps in and takes stock of the situation before more taxpayer money is wasted.

The first step would be a full audit of all environmental water, including effective research on how much is needed and how it is going to be delivered. This must include analysis of all water recovered before the Basin Plan from programs like The Living Murray and the National Water Initiative.

There also needs to be a proper and effective assessment of how much water can be delivered without causing flood damage to public and private property. Ms Meyer said a serious Basin Plan that was not politically motivated would include infrastructure projects and measures that make South Australia accountable.

"How can you have a plan to restore the Lower Lakes when it does not include investigation into the impact of the barrages, the south-east drainage scheme, increasing waterfront housing developments, under-utilisation of the Adelaide desalination scheme and other localised factors?

"We also need to stop ostracising scientists who do not support the MDBA's 'just add water' philosophy.

"An effective plan would be looking at the quality of water delivery to achieve environmental outcomes, not a quantity based on rushed political timeframes, which is what we have.

"The plan is a farce ... it's a shambles. And as it rolls out we are sacrificing livelihoods and community wellbeing.

"Successive federal governments should hang their collective heads in shame," Ms Meyer said.

For further information and interviews: Vicki Meyer Deputy Chair Speak Up Campaign email vicki@denifreighters.com.au or phone 0409 600 749