

Rather than being drawn into a “state water brawl” (9/12), the current crisis presents South Australia with a strategic opportunity.

I was Deputy Chair of the 2015 Senate Committee into the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. The Committee travelled throughout the Basin receiving submissions and taking evidence from over 500 individuals and organisations.

SA has been living on borrowed time over Murray-Darling water for many years and the longer we put off the inevitable the worse it will be. South Australia does not contribute any of the water into the MDB, yet is guaranteed 1850 GL annually regardless of how much rain falls in the catchment states. Of that 1850 GL, Adelaide uses less than 3%.

MDB water is extremely valuable – around \$1m/GL in places. Half the water flowing into SA evaporates in the Lower Lakes – a \$1bn worth. As for switching on the desalination plant, that’s like spending \$1 worth of water to grow 50c worth of oranges. There’s an old saying, *“Anything not based on economic reality is doomed to failure”*.

The Senate Inquiry made 31 recommendations, including an analysis of removing the Goolwa barrages and returning the Lower Lakes to their natural estuarine (sea water) state. It also recommended the Commonwealth fund the restoration of surface flows from the South-East into the lower Coorong and redirecting all existing drainage discharges from the SE into the Coorong. South Australia is in the box seat to resolve a number of economic, environmental (and political) problems.

Bob Day

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