

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister's statement irresponsible and foolhardy says shadow

Comments by state Minister for Agriculture Michael O'Brien that irrigators can expect up to 40 per cent cuts in their water allocation demonstrate his ignorance and inexperience.

So says Opposition Agriculture spokesman Adrian Pederick, who was responding to the minister's remarks made on morning radio.

'The minister made the statement that SA Riverland irrigators can expect allocation cuts of up to 40 per cent.' Mr Pederick said.

'To make this statement before the fact is clearly established is foolhardy and dangerous.

'Worse than that, the minister admits it's based on hearsay – what he called "leaks".

'No doubt the statement refers to a recent submission by the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists on the Murray Darling Basin Authority's yet-to-be declared sustainable diversion limits, advocating a 39 per cent cut in the Murray region.

'If this is the best effort of the self-proclaimed best agriculture minister in Australia, SA's entire agriculture, food and fishery industries are in trouble.

'The minister's grossly irresponsible comments based on little more than rumour could affect vital decisions of thousands of SA irrigators.

'Even his own colleague, federal Water Minister Penny Wong has said the subject is still being debated and it is not yet known which Murray Darling Basin regions will be affected.

'Senator Wong said she welcomed contributions to the debate but she doubtless expected something more informed and constructive from the country's "best agriculture minister".'