I am a cane farmer in the Giru Benefitted Area and took part in your first irrigation pricing review information session in Clare. It was mentioned that you will look into the situation in the Giru Benefitted Area. I only started farming in that area about 3 years ago. My understanding is, that before the BRIA was extended into the Giru area the existing water yield of that area out of bores and the Haughton River was measured over several years. That average unsupplemented yield was then to be topped up by water releases from the Haughton Main Channel straight into the Haughton River to end up with twice the amount of irrigation water being available to irrigators in the area. Since the natural yield of the relatively small local Haughton based system would fluctuate more than the bigger Burdekin Dams natural yield you would expect that the top up form the Burdekin Dam would be sometimes bigger and sometimes smaller than 50% in an ideal world but would be averaging out to 50%over time. Obviously there are some losses when you add water to a river and not all the top up was expected to make it to the irrigators. I guess back in the day those losses were estimated by Sunwater and then compared to the cost of building channel or pipeline extensions into the Giru Benefitted Area and it was decided the estimated losses were less costly and therefore supplementing the Haughton River directly was deemed to be the most efficient way to deliver the extra water. Therefore the BRIA channel and pipeline system was not extended into the GBA and all BRIA irrigators were to benefit from lower costs as a result, because additional allocation water would be sold without additional channel or pipeline costs . Back then, this was a Sunwater commercial decision based on their assumptions. It seems that the losses in the GBA nowadays seem to be bigger than anticipated when that innitial commercial decision was made. I feel that some of the losses could be avoided through better enforcment of the water ordering system and some water may unintentionally supplement bores outside the GBA. But from the start it was to be expected that the natural yield of they GBA would be reduced. Prior to supplementation water levels of the aquifier and the Haughton River connected to it, were in dry times lowered several meters sometimes up to the point of running dry. During rainfall events all that empty storage capacity in the system could fill up creating the full amount of natural yield. When the system became supplemented the river level was kept up, to constantly recharge the system because river and aquifier became a substitute for channels and pipelines. A system that is kept close to the full level obviously does not have space to catch and store massive inflows be it from a Haughton River flood or local rainfall. On top of that any losses into surrounding aquifiers and officially unsupplemented bores outside the GBA would also increase if the average aquifier level in the GBA is kept higher than before. Initially there were rubber bladders on the Haughton River weirs that would have allowed greater variation of the river waterlevels to improve conversion of Haughton River floods into natural yield. Those bladders could have backed up extra meters of water but were removed for reasons unknown to me and now Sunwater can only play with a few cm between water overtopping the weirs and irrigation pumps put in by farmers following Sunwater height standards running dry.. But since the initial decisionmaking process regarding the delivery system in the GBA was not made by individual irrigators they should not be penalized by higher prices for that area, now that the intitial commercial decision does not seem to work out because Sunwater underestimated GBA losses and removed those rubber bladders.

If a section of the Haughton open channel would have been built using bad clay to save on initial building costs and now would loose 30% more water than initially planned or kept erroding because of the decision to use that clay instead of building a more expensive concrete channel , noone would suggest that just those water users downstream from the problem area would have to pay

30% more . That extra loss or cost would be seen as a result of a Sunwater misjudgement and the extra waterloss would be either shared by all BRIA users or the channel would be lined and that cost would be shared by all BRIA users.

So if the initial GBA decision was faulty, the same principle should apply: Either all BRIA users share the extra cost of losses or share the cost of improving the existing system by delivering the top up for the GBA through new channels and pipelines in the future and allowing the GBA to catch it`s full natural yield again instead of supplementing the Haughton river directly to save distribution network costs!