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HANSARD

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LOWER MURRAY FLOOD PLAIN REPORT

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:23): I rise to congratulate Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland on the launch of its Lower Murray Flood Plain Report, an important investigation into sustainable use of the Lower Murray flood plain between Mannum and Wellington, which has not been fully utilised since the drought. I was pleased to be involved with the report presentation, which was launched by my colleague, Vickie Chapman, MP, in Murray Bridge on 22 October 2013.

The SPEAKER: The member for Hammond will refer to the member for Bragg or the deputy leader as one of those two.

Mr PEDERICK: My apologies, Mr Speaker—the member for Bragg and Deputy Leader, who was there to present the launch of this report, because neither the environment minister nor the agriculture minister could be bothered to do it. This report was launched on 22 October 2013 and was attended by a large number of interested members of the Murraylands community, including primary producers, tourism operators and local government representatives.

The purpose of this study was to develop recommendations for feasible, sustainable future land uses on the Lower Murray flood plain. Initially designed to implement recommendations of the Lower Murray Swamps group, chaired by Dean Brown, the report focuses on future sustainable use for all land titles located within the 1956 and the Lower Murray reclaimed irrigation areas between Mannum and Wellington.

The aim of the study was to develop recommendations which would inform land use planning policy and regional development endeavours for the floodplain to provide maximum economic, social and environmental benefit for the region. In addition to this, it had a focus to explore alternative methods of use, such as tourism and recreation, as long as these uses are compatible with and allow for future development of primary production.

Tourism, residential marinas and created wetlands are great potential land use opportunities. However, they involve some complexities. Primary production methods are the most suitable land use for the floodplain. The report found opportunities exist to grow and strengthen the existing dairy industry (which has been decimated), as well as to diversify into primary production sectors such as livestock farming and horticulture.

Local farmers are certainly in favour of the report and are seeking to explore the report's findings. Two guest speakers at the launch in Murray Bridge explained how the floodplain currently is not being fully utilised. Don Ruggiero, of Swanport Harvest, wants section of the floodplain developed for horticultural use, and United Dairy Power, which is a major employer in the region, is keen for the floodplain to be better utilised by the dairy industry long into the future.

As part of the report, economic analysis and a regional impact statement were undertaken. Looking at the impact of the identified future land use opportunities, namely, dairy, beef, field vegetables,

intensive horticulture and tourism, the RDA report has highlighted an estimated increase of between 350 to 800 regional jobs and the potential for between \$35 million and \$90 million coming into the region, depending on the range of impact, from low to high. I would like to take the time to highlight a number of the key findings in the report:

- The Lower Murray floodplain needs a united strategic vision for the future, and unites the floodplain stakeholders in a shared and prosperous future.
- Any sustainable future of the floodplain requires ongoing maintenance of levee banks and irrigation and drainage infrastructure.
- Communication needs to be increased to government, current and future landholders on the unique environmental requirements needed for sustainability of the floodplain.
- Further targeted research and development are required to look at increasing efficiencies in irrigation infrastructure, alternative and more water-efficient crop species, and potential market opportunities for floodplain produce.
- A need for government to communicate to landholders that they are supportive of industry on the floodplain.
- Consideration of changes to planning policy to enable sustainable development to occur, including South Australian Planning Policy Library modules, and local development plans to account for the unique nature of the floodplain.

Those included in the working group who assisted the RDA prepare the report were the Rural City of Murray Bridge, Mid Murray Council, Coorong District Council, PIRSA, Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, the Environment Protection Authority and the Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board. URPS, Mark Siebentritt & Associates, Rural Solutions SA and EconSearch were also involved at a consultancy level, and all should be congratulated on their involvement and interest in important report on this section of the Murray. I must say a specific thanks and congratulations must go to Regional Development Australia Murraylands and Riverland Chief Executive Brenton Lewis, and his project manager Tamara Rohrlach for a very impressive report and a good job very well done in all respects.

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