



Adrian Pederick MP
Member for Hammond

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
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RIVER MURRAY ECO ACTION

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:30): I rise today to speak about the proposed no-wash zones for the River Murray. On 9 January 2013, *The Advertiser* reported that boat use will be restricted at 28 sites along the River Murray under a government-sponsored plan to reduce damaging wash in sensitive areas of the river and the lakes. The no-wash zone plan is a part of the River Murray ECO Action group's campaign. It is a campaign jointly coordinated by a number of organisations, which include the Boating Industry Association of South Australia and KESAB, with the support of local government, the Environment Protection Authority and the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

Of the 28 sites proposed by the ECO Action group, five are situated in the Hammond electorate. Of the five zones proposed for the Hammond electorate, the most vocal in my electorate have been residents at Sunnyside, Murrawong, Willow Banks and Greenbanks. The area includes roughly 40 shacks on a terrific stretch of the river. River users and people associated with the Sunnyside area have joined forces to combat the zone proposed for their patch and I have met with representatives at Sunnyside to discuss the matter. People who reside in or share this area have been extremely proactive when it comes to using the river and managing the environment they love, and I personally believe a no-wash zone is not necessary for this area.

First, I want it to be known that I am a strong advocate for the health of the River Murray. However, I have several issues with the handling of the matter thus far. Since the no-wash zones were first reported, the plan has received considerable public backlash, yet the government and the ECO Action group have done little to provide substantial information to the public, failing to allay their fears on this matter. On 7 February 2013, the Minister for the River Murray was asked a number of questions in the other place regarding the ECO Action group's campaign. He responded with advice on the Riverbank Collapse Hazard Program, which is linked to the drought and shows a clear misunderstanding of the issue.

Social media such as Twitter and Facebook is driving a strong campaign opposing the no-wash zones. Two thousand and twenty-four Facebook users like a page that is extremely vocal against the proposals. A website has been established that provides up-to-date information on the situation and I am sure my email inbox is not the only one to have been filled by concerned constituents and river users. I have been informed the no-wash zones are a public awareness campaign, not a regulatory arrangement, but my major concern is the role the EPA and DEWNR are playing, which so far has not been made clear. Whilst currently the measures are not regulatory, I have witnessed several instances where members of the Hammond community have had the EPA blessing, only to find out in the future that the EPA wishes to impose licensing arrangements and fees, hence my concerns with its involvement in this so-called public awareness campaign.

In addition to this, I am concerned that there has been no public consultation and that the proposed sites are the conclusion of a 10-day on-water survey. I believe strongly that these two points are downfalls of an initiative that had the intention to create public awareness among South Australians who enjoy the river about threats to the natural environment from the wake of boats and to encourage them to act with care at a number of sensitive locations. Although a consultation process has since

been mooted following the public backlash, I feel the damage is already done as far as getting the message out to the public.

Secondly, science-based conclusions are the only way when dealing with the mighty River Murray. We all want to enjoy a healthy river. However, it is decisions made based on a lack of scientific evidence that continue to have a negative impact on the lifeblood of our state. Fair and reasonable consultation, combined with in-depth scientific study, must be conducted before implementing the proposed no-wash zones and boating restrictions. If this is not done there is the very real possibility that tourism in River Murray towns will drop, in turn impacting local businesses in towns such as Murray Bridge, Tailem Bend, Myponga, Milang and Goolwa. I can assure you that all along the River Murray has suffered, very much so, financially and environmentally during the recent drought and they do not need any further impost on their communities.

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