

# Basin flows headed our way

THE first major river flows under the Murray Darling Basin Plan are on their way to the Lower Lakes.

Federal Environment Minister Mark Butler announced at the Lower Lakes last Thursday that 300 gigalitres of environmental water would be released as part of the environmental watering effort.

"This 300 billion litres of Commonwealth environmental water will support a broad range of environmental outcomes within the River Murray system, including flows to the river channel, low-level floodplain wetlands, the Coorong and the Lower Lakes," Mr Butler said.

The announcement follows another 330GL of Commonwealth water approved for use across the rest of basin earlier in the year.

South Australian Water Minister Ian Hunter said he expected much of the latest release to make it to Lakes Albert and Alexandrina.

"The Lower Murray is likely to receive much of this water from the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder," Mr Hunter said.

He said the water would help native fish spawning, refresh wetlands and help the Coorong region recover from the lingering effects of drought.

"It will also keep the Murray Mouth open," Mr Hunter said.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick welcomed the news but said there was still more to do to realise the Basin Plan's ambitions.

"...It is imperative that flows are maintained so we do not have a repeat of past events - the lower reaches of the river are still dealing with the legacies of decision made during the drought such as the construction of the bunds," Mr Pederick said.

"Whilst I welcome this news, far more work and research needs to be conducted for the long-term protection of the River Murray and in particular, the Murray Mouth, Lower Lakes and Coorong."

The good news comes after after Mother Nature delivered her own boost to the system.

About 8.3 gigalitres is forecast to flow into the South Australia over the next week following rain in key catchments, helping to raise the River Murray above pool level at Swan Reach, Mannum and Murray Bridge.