

NEWS

No-wash fears make waves

By **Peri Strathearn**

RESISTANCE to proposed River Murray no-wash zones is growing, regardless of whether they are enforceable or not.

Around 70 locals attended a community meeting at Sunnyside on Sunday to voice their fear and anger at any proposal to restrict skiing activity along the river.

Several Transport Department marine safety officers went along to answer questions, but those present still voted unanimously to reject the proposed no-wash zones and elected members to a committee that will continue the fight on their behalf.

Committee member and Sunnyside resident Georgina Sutton said the meeting - and a Facebook page that now has more than 1400 subscribers - had galvanised opposition to the proposed zones.

"There was a real sense of outrage at the lack of consultation," she said.

"People are really angry.

"Enforceable or not, we'd not be able to ski in our properties."

She said locals feared that even a trial of the no-wash zones could lead to them being made permanent.

She also argued that ski boats were not the sole cause of erosion anyway.

"We have to reinforce our bank, but we get just as much wave activity from a strong south-westerly breeze," she said.

"There needs to be a high level of education and compliance to all users of the river, not just people who use wake boats.

"But you don't do that by putting arbitrary things in place without consultation."

The new committee plans to make noise in the media, liaise with other communities and meet with political figures in an effort to have their concerns addressed.

They will meet Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick on February 8 and hope to see the relevant State Government minister in the near future.

Mr Pederick said it was disappointing the draft no-wash zones plan had been made public before any consultation process had been finalised.

"We've had a lot of feedback

from people about this proposal that arrived like a sledgehammer from nowhere," he said.

"What has to happen here is that both the Weatherill Labor Government and the Eco Action Group make sure a full consultation process is initiated and there needs to be a full, proper scientific evaluation."

Mr Pederick said he supported both recreational boating and environmental management, but ultimately wanted everyone to be able to enjoy the river.

The River Murray Eco Action campaign proposed posting no-wash advisory signs in 28 zones between the river's mouth and the Victorian border, including 12 between Wellington and Swan Reach, last year.

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