



No savings for River Murray

By Peri Strathearn

THE River Murray will pay, in part, for cuts to State Government spending in Thursday's budget.

Primary Industries and Regions SA will spend \$2 million from the Save the River Murray Fund, money raised through a levy on SA Water users, on "key regional initiatives".

No State Government ministers were able to elaborate on the initiatives by the time of print.

Meanwhile, the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources - usually responsible for managing Save the River Murray money - will spend \$4 million less of it.

The Save the River Murray Fund was established in 2012 to improve the river's health and make South Australia's water supply more secure.

The Government will spend \$4.3 million less on River Murray, Lower Lakes and Coorong environmental recovery programs next financial year, and will reduce its payments to the State's natural resources management boards by \$1 million.

However, it re-committed to providing the Coorong with at least 25 gigalitres of fresh water and updating the Lower Lakes and Coorong fishery management plan.

The news was better for anyone crossing the river: a new steel-hulled ferry will replace one of three remaining timber-hulled models still in service next year at a cost of \$2.7 million.

Another \$3.5 million has been allocated to buy a second ferry the following year.

The new ferries will rotate between Mannum, Tailem Bend and upstream crossings as required.

Murray Bridge and Meningie's State Emergency Service units will also get new service boats.

In addition, the Government made good on its pre-election promise of \$7.5 million for the Tailem Bend Motorsport Park.

But Liberal Member for Hammond



Numbers game: Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis explains the measures the State Government has chosen to take in its 2014-15 budget.

Adrian Pederick argued cuts to the South Australian Research and Development Institute and Biosecurity SA showed independent MP Geoff Brock's deal for regional South Australia was a dud.

"Treasurer Koutsantonis and Minister Brock have provided no money for regional roads, reduced R and D and biosecurity and cut jobs," he said.

He also noted the Gifford Hill development at Murray Bridge had been overlooked.

"I will continue to fight for the Murray Bridge Racing Club," he said.

"This project will underpin the future of Murray Bridge and will create jobs and grow economic development."

BUDGET MEASURES

Spending:

- Grants of \$8500 for seniors who buy new, smaller homes - \$14 million
- Jobs Accelerator Fund to support job creation in regional areas - \$10 million
- Expanded Patient Assistant Transport Scheme - \$9.3 million
- Mental Health Commission to advise government - \$8.4 million
- Vouchers of \$50 for children's sports club fees - \$1.1 million

Savings:

- Cuts to health spending yet to be announced - \$332 million
- No more council rate concessions for pensioners and seniors from 2015-16 - \$34.2 million