



Public knows best

By **Claire Campbell**

EFFECTIVELY managing the irrigation, social and environmental needs of the River Murray across three states is a difficult task.

That is why there was wide-spread support from the public for more infrastructure to benefit critical river ecosystems at the Murray Darling Basin Authority's (MDBA) community meeting in Murray Bridge last week.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said he was pleased to hear talk about more infrastructure at the southern basin to reinstate natural flow and retrieve water for the environment.

"I think there needed to be more investment in infrastructure from the start, it would have cut some of the angst out in the early years," he said.

"There's quite a bit of work to do but we have to work with the rest of the states; we're well on the way to a solution but the true test will be when we have another drought.

"I'd like to see more work done on where we're going into the future of the Lower Murray swamps."

But he rejected the State Government's proposal to use lake-level cycling as a solution for Lake Albert's salinity levels.

"The community members made it well clear that an environmental study should be taken up in regards to the proposed connector," he said.

"The (Lake Albert Scoping) study confirms that the Coorong Connector is the best option for reducing salinity at Lake Albert; the benefits if the river

was brought back to health could be close to 300 jobs.

"It's totally unbudgeted for; lake-level cycling may require high amounts of water to be purchased in the future to enable this option to be feasible."

As outlined in the meeting, the entire basin was trying to save water but Mr Pederick said if the State Government implemented lake-level cycling it would require more water from upstream.

Former Narrung dairy farmer Lorraine Leese said her family farm had experienced the pain of the drought.

"I lived on the narrows so I know exactly how it works ... I get cross

because I know everyone means well but there's some things computer modelling can't do; we need to be aware of the implications with mother nature," she said.

"The Basin Plan was something that had to happen because the river knows no boundary.

"I wonder how history will judge us, all you can do is hope."

Acting Murray Bridge Mayor Barry Laubsch said the Lower Lakes were vital to people this side of the river.

"I think the perception with it for many of us in South Australia is that we get the butt end of the river," he said.

"We do need some assistance, perhaps more so than some others."

MDBA member and meeting chair Dianne Davidson said there were some good ideas touted and local issues raised which the authority would work to address.