

## **MANNUM FERRY – 30 October 2008**

**Mr VENNING (Schubert) (12:47):** I move:

That this house

- (a) condemns the Rann Labor government for its total inaction for not restoring the closed upstream ferry services at Mannum to at least a 12 tonne carrying capacity; and
- (b) notes the inconvenience that the community has experienced having to drive 30 kilometres to the nearest bridge when the downstream ferry is closed.

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:54):** I rise to support this motion from the member for Schubert, because most of our electorates are joined, and a lot of that is by ferry. It is sad that, in these days of low river flows, ferries have gone out of action, as this one has at Mannum, creating a major issue for that town and for people wanting to get to eastern side to the wonderful seat of Hammond or for people in the electorate of Hammond wanting to get over to electorate of Schubert. As the member for Schubert rightly said, it was a great tragedy that a lady died trying to get to the Mannum Hospital by ferry. I believe she had prior knowledge of her medical complaint. I do not think the ferry was entirely to blame, but the hold-up would not have helped. I believe she was a young mother—is that correct?

**Mr Venning:** 32.

**Mr PEDERICK:** She was 32, with a young family. Ferries right up and down the river have had severe impacts from lack of water and a lack of government attention. I remember going to a meeting at Mannum—and I take my hat off to the transport people from the department who turned up, because they were sent there and told not to say anything. I wish they had just said something so the community could work out why they could not speak.

The minister did not show up, nor did a colleague or another member from the other side. I hate being at a meeting and having a go at departmental people who are just doing their job. They would have made life a lot easier for themselves, because this community has, quite frankly, run out of time. This meeting was months ago. They were expressing their disquiet and the simple fact is that they were just asking simple questions like, 'Where would the river level drop to and how much water would the river have in it when the ferry remaining in service at Mannum runs out of service?' These people are genuinely concerned. Again, it is out of the urban boundaries of Adelaide, and this is the nub of the problem: it gets neglected.

I go around this state, and through the city, and I meet so many business people—Labor staffers, in fact, who have holiday homes—and people of all political persuasions who need access to these ferries, especially the Mannum ferry. It has a huge impact on tourism. It has a huge impact on grain carting—we are just coming into harvest. It just cuts out the options for already stressed primary producers.

I think it is disgraceful that the minister hides in this place, or in Adelaide, and sends out his departmental people. To their credit, they stood by his direction and did not give an answer, but I can assure you that they copped a hiding at that meeting. In the end, I got to make a point. I said that I believed the river would drop another 602 to maybe 800 millimetres—.8 of a metre maximum—before it would run out of service. I do not have the full resources of a department, or several departments, in regard to this matter, but that is where I believe it may end up with worst-case scenarios. We have noticed this inaction right along the river. The upstream ferry ran out of service—'Oh, we'll just use the downstream one.'

I do not want to be completely critical. The government recognised that, with only one ferry, it needed to make it an optimal operation, so it put two operators on board to make sure that, while one is getting the cars on board, the other one is at the other end ready to take off. I give credit to the government for that, but it is not enough to sustain a community. Businesses throughout the town have said that they have suffered losses of up to 20 or 30 per cent, notwithstanding the present financial crisis.

Residents in Mannum have to travel either to Murray Bridge or upstream to Blanchetown if they want to use the bridge, and it is just not right—especially for emergency services and fires. We are looking at another dry summer coming up, and where will we be then when fire units and ambulances cannot get across in time to assist the community?

With those few words I commend the motion moved by the member for Schubert. It certainly affects my electorate; it affects many people just in their daily lives, and my sympathies are certainly with the family of the lady who died recently. The community does need more support, right up and down the river. It is one thing to say, 'Let the river go', but it is another when local people are involved.