

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Adrian Pederick MP JP**

Member for Hammond

**Opposition Whip**

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**Agriculture, Food & Fisheries and Forests**

Thursday September 30, 2010

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## **Budget cuts to regional SA foreshadowed in State Strategic Plan**

Cuts to numerous services, facilities and programs across country South Australia were no surprise says Adrian Pederick, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Food & Fisheries and Forests.

‘You only have to look at the 2007 Strategic Plan and the 2008 and 2010 Progress Reports to see this government doesn’t think about regional SA, other than its value as a cash cow,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘There is almost no mention at all of agriculture apart from a desire to limit soil erosion of arable land. The only reference to primary industry is in relation to mining. Tourism gets a mention and there is discussion about rural population. In the ‘Building Communities’ section, there is a stated aim to maintain regional SA’s proportional share of the state’s population with a target set slightly lower than the existing figure. Given the nature of recent cuts, the next four years will be more about saving communities than building them.’

Mr Pederick said the 2010-11 budget details a host of cuts and savings to be achieved through milking regional SA.

‘Loss of the fuel subsidy, small schools grants, increases in fees and charges to primary producers driven by the government’s full cost recovery policy, withdrawal of support to the wine industry – will inevitably all result in considerable cost increases in the cost of rural living in SA.

‘Those increases will necessarily be passed on through food and commodity prices, raising the cost of living in what is already the highest taxed state in the country.

‘On top of that, this government plans to dump 180 rural staff from the Primary Industries sector, cease funding the Advisory Board of Agriculture and is planning to sell off 100 years of plantation timber placing hundreds more regional jobs at dire risk.

With scant evidentiary need they’ve imposed limitations on the commercial fishing industry that threaten crucial export markets, and are pushing for vast marine parks that threaten regional economies without clearly identifying the needs, causes or effective solutions.

Hard-working farmers, many of whom have used up their equity and retirement reserves to survive the drought, now find themselves with reduced services and facilities – both public and private, reduced employment opportunities for children to remain in the area, reduced investment in regionally based agriculture research and development and reduced support for agriculture related consultative bodies.

And all this is happening against a backdrop of super-schools, super-hospitals, super-highways and super-entertainment facilities.

It typifies Labor’s underlying philosophy that redistributing rural wealth into city-based big ticket infrastructure is the best way to ensure their re-election.

Agriculture Minister O’Brien talks boldly of making food the export equal of mining and defence. The value of SA’s exports fell in 09-10, despite growth in metal ore exports. The overall drop was due in part to falls in wheat and wine exports.

Labor’s constant down-grading of agriculture in their planning and funding will ensure Minister O’Brien’s wish remains nothing more than a dream.