

MEDIA RELEASE

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Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests

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New Ag, Fisheries and Forestry minister's appointment shows up government's lack of depth

The appointment of Paul Caica to the vital portfolios of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Forestry highlights the state government's lack of depth according to the Opposition's Adrian Pederick.

Mr Pederick, who is Shadow Minister for the same portfolios, has been on the land all his life and represents the rural electorate of Hammond, which stretches from the River Murray to the Victorian border.

Mr Pederick said while he respected Mr Caica's experience as a minister, he was concerned that the city-based parliamentarian would struggle to understand the state's rural communities and industries.

“Just at this moment, SA rural communities are facing extraordinary challenges. Financial pressures aggravated by the global financial situation, shrinking markets, rising input costs, the threat of an emissions trading scheme that will severely affect farmers incomes and viability, topped off with a serious drought with all its associated consequences make life difficult enough.

‘On top of this the state government is complicating things for rural communities with various policies sowing seeds of uncertainty such as shared services, major changes in country health and on again off again projects like Mobilong prison all cause uncertainty for country people.

‘Limited knowledge and understanding of country people, country industry and country economy will make it extremely difficult for Minister Caica to react quickly and appropriately to the myriad issues facing one third of the state's population.

‘The mistakes and mismanagement of his predecessor – a country person – demonstrate how hard it can be for the minister presiding over such a large and vital part of the state's overall economy to keep abreast of things.

‘While I congratulate Minister Caica on his appointment I urge him to spend time in rural areas with country people and listen very carefully to what they tell him, rather than depend solely on the advice of city-based bureaucrats.’