

MEDIA RELEASE

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Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests

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Government putting health of country school community at risk

Indecision and delay are threatening the health and safety of a country school community says local MP, Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick.

‘A lack of state government commitment to country South Australia and delay in the demolition and removal of a sub-standard school building at the Coomandook Area School has exposed students, staff and visitors to unacceptable health risks.’ said Mr Pederick, himself a former student of the school.

Speaking in state parliament last week, Mr Pederick said the Education Department had declared eight years ago that the Junior School building was surplus to needs and would be removed.

‘Since that time, the building has deteriorated to such an extent that it poses serious health risks to the entire school community,’ he said.

‘Wood rot is rampant leaving windows insecure, floors unsafe to walk on and gaping holes providing easy access for vermin.

‘Birds, bees and flies enter at will as there are no screens. Air conditioners are old and inefficient and lack of proper maintenance raises the prospect of Legionnaires’ Disease.’

Mr Pederick explained the biggest threat came from mice, which entered the building in great numbers, fouling books, equipment and most disturbingly children’s bags and lunch boxes.

‘Many nasty diseases are carried by rodents. At best, the smell of mouse droppings is vile and unpleasant – at worst it’s life threatening. Furthermore, the profusion of mice is attracting snakes, adding to the dangers,’ he said.

‘The government is being miserable about the cost of demolition and has left the promised removal on the back burner. To allow this situation to continue unresolved for so long is unforgivable. I would not be at all surprised to find there are other country regional facilities suffering the same disgraceful neglect.

‘Not only has the government ignored the problem, they have not provided any alternative facility or funding to re-house the Junior School. If this was a city school, there would be a huge outcry followed by immediate action. The people of Coomandook have been exceptionally patient but they’ve had enough.

‘I call on the government to acknowledge that the situation is completely unacceptable, bite whatever cost bullets have to be bitten and fix the problem immediately’