



MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP JP

Member for Hammond

Thursday February 8, 2007

Give 'Rann's Folly' the Wellington boot - says Pederick

'River folk and irrigators from Blanchetown to Wellington may also be sacrificed by this government in its desperate attempt to cover its failure to Waterproof South Australia in time,' said Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick following the first day of State Parliament this week.

'Mr Rann has already made it clear he is quite prepared to sacrifice all the people of the Lower Lakes and Coorong in order to shore up Adelaide's water supply and cover his government's failure to 'Waterproof' the state in time.

'Now it is apparent that he is also prepared to look the other way as all the people who live, work and play along the river below Lock 1 and all the irrigators who depend on that water are also cut adrift.

'The government has refused to come clean on its plan for a proposed weir downstream of Wellington, yet it is increasingly obvious that whatever form it takes, about 80 percent of its structure will remain in the river forever.

Mr Pederick said that at this moment, the most likely plan involves dumping some 700,000 tonnes of rock across 80 percent of the 2.6 km wide river/lake bed east from Pomanda Island. It will be left there long after this current drought has passed.

'The problem is that one of nature's special tricks is to make water run uphill all the way from Wellington to Blanchetown.

'When a strong sou' westerly wind blows across the lake it forces an enormous amount of water back up the river. This 'wind-tide' affects the river as far back as Lock 1. Riverboat skippers who have been working the river for decades tell us they have seen the river level change by as much as a metre in a few hours. It frequently leaves boats at Milang, Clayton and Goolwa high and dry, as it did three weeks ago.

Mr Pederick said this movement of water flushes the water at the end of the river, oxygenating and reinvigorating it. He said it is vital to the quality and condition of the river water in the lower reaches of the Murray, and therefore vital to irrigators and the tens of thousands of Adelaide residents who spend their leisure hours on the river.

'If this weir goes ahead and the 'temporary' wall stays there, obstructing 80 percent of the river's flow – in good times as well as bad – life as we know it below Blanchetown will end. Imagine what that will do for industry, commerce, tourism etc, and imagine what that will do for land values.

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The government must redouble its efforts to find other ways to relieve this temporary problem. Investigating other means of lowering pump pick-ups, developing coffer dams, improving water delivery to storages in the Adelaide Hills, upgrading existing infrastructure to minimise leakages caused by pipe failures, rapidly develop storm-water capture and treatment, assist industry to reduce the use of water, and most of all pour our energies into designing and constructing a desalination plant. They could also consider placing another pumping station above Lock 1 to give us future options.

Some of these measures can be utilized immediately, while others can be fast-tracked with the aim of bringing us out at the same point we would be if a weir was started this year.

'This weir must never be started. The State Bank disaster made SA look fools across the country. A weir at the end of the river, wiping out the largest Ramsar-listed wetland in the southern hemisphere, will shame us around the world.

'It would become known as 'Rann's Folly'. The government should admit a weir at Wellington was an ill-conceived, knee-jerk idea and give it the boot.'