



MEDIA RELEASE

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- The River Murray
- Sustainability and Climate Change

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Government splitting hairs over water assistance says Pederick

The State government is splitting hairs to justify its lack of support for irrigators and residents around the Lower Lakes according to local MP, Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick.

In Parliament last week, Shadow Minister for Water Security Mitch Williams asked the Minister for Water Security Karlene Maywald why water was being carted at no cost to some households and businesses near Lake Bonney and yet no support was being offered around the Lower Lakes.

Mr Williams said the Opposition understands this free supply of water will continue until the completion of a pipeline to those places near Lake Bonney.

In her response, Minister Maywald stated that the Lake Bonney project is 'funded by the Murray Darling Basin Commission because of action that was determined necessary under the contingency planning at the national level through the decision making of the Premier and the Prime Minister'.

Minister Maywald added the pipeline is being funded as part of the closure of Lake Bonney. She said no government action had contributed to falling Lower Lake levels, stating 'the drought had contributed to that' and that 'drought relief is largely the responsibility of the Federal government.'

Mr Pederick said the Minister was splitting hairs to avoid providing vitally needed assistance to Lower Lakes communities and arguing about who is responsible for what was symptomatic of the reasons the river and lakes are in such grave trouble.

'Whether it's an earthen bank at Chambers Creek or a concrete and steel wall at Blanchetown is irrelevant. They are both devices to control the river's flow and their operation is largely a product of government decisions. Would they have stopped the flow into Lake Bonney if there were not a drought?

'This government has long claimed low flows in the Lower Murray are a product of drought yet Minister Maywald herself has stated that mismanagement of the system over a number of decades is a contributing factor.

'The flow being maintained at Lock 1 is largely to manage salinity below the lock and maintain a potable quality at the Mannum and Murray Bridge pump off-takes. A greater flow would be needed to maintain any sort of water access below Wellington. Undeniably, the drought is a factor but so are government decisions on who gets what.'

Mr Pederick said, either way, communities around the Lower Lakes were desperate and the government should be playing its part in facilitating some water access below Wellington.

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