

MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP JP

Member for Hammond

Shadow Minister for

The River Murray - Forests

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries

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Maywald assurances on floodwater clear as mud

The possibility that water-starved South Australia might have to pay back floodwater flowing from NSW underlines the current inequity and the need for central control of the entire Murray Darling Basin, independent of state interests.

This was the reaction from state opposition River Murray spokesman Adrian Pederick on the news that the NSW government may demand the 'repayment' of the 148 gigalitres (gl) offered to South Australia last week for the environment.

'NSW Premier Keneally declined to state that she will not ask for the 148gl to be repaid from future water entitlements,' Mr Pederick said.

'Minister Maywald's assurance that the water came with 'no strings attached' has a hollow ring when weighed against her subsequent statement "Where there may be payment required ... is during the negotiations from the beginning of next water year ..."

'That's as clear as mud and hardly reassuring to South Australians.

'If ever there was a case to support the argument for central control of the entire Murray Darling Basin, this is it.

'At this end of the nation's greatest river, where all the rinsing and cleaning is done, we have crumbling river banks and drying lakes that threaten the health of the entire system.

'Are we forever doomed to go cap in hand to the eastern states for water that is the lifeblood of a national river system? Clearly, this water would have come down the river past Menindee Lakes. Why should we have to beg for it, let alone 'buy' it?

'Premier Rann and his government ministers were quick to take credit for this water 'bonus', credit I doubt they were due.

'Now we find we may have to go without next year or the year after to make up for it.

'South Australians have every right to be thoroughly disillusioned with this government and will show their displeasure at next month's state election.'