



MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP

Member for Hammond

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Pederick blasts Maywald's rejection of salty river water claim

Local Member of Parliament Adrian Pederick has blasted recent claims by Minister for the River Murray Karlene Maywald concerning Lower Murray salinity levels if a weir is built near Wellington. Mrs Maywald has rejected suggestions river water held above the proposed weir would be too salty to use as a consequence of the weir's construction.

Mr Pederick referred to a statement Mrs Maywald made last week to the Murray Valley Standard in which she said "... salinity would not be a problem if the weir was put in place and the community should not be concerned",

'Yet, in a document released by her own department on February 15th, it was clearly stated that "within the pool created by the weir ... salinity levels will increase and there will be a high risk of toxic algal blooms," said Mr Pederick.

'She can't have it both ways. On one hand she's reassuring water customers around the state that fast-tracking filtration plants will solve the stated salinity problem. Now she's seeking to reassure others around the Lower Murray that water quality is not an issue.'

Mr Pederick said the Minister's subsequent comment that if the water became too saline for human consumption the government would 'look at other options' - after \$110million has been spent - demonstrated how shallow their knowledge and understanding was.

'Not only does it show the government doesn't know what it's doing, this "suck it and see" approach is foolish. My advice to river dwellers and recreational users is 'Don't suck it. It might make you sick''.

Mr Pederick said the public needed to understand exactly what was going on with impact statements on the weir. He said the state government had asked Canberra for an exemption from completing the required Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before beginning construction of the weir and instead planned to have an Environmental Assessment done by the Department of Environment and Heritage.

'The Minister has said a full EIS would be done before 'operation' of the weir, (ie. closing off the 300 metre spillway), a decision on which is expected in October. By that time, construction of the weir will have begun and the 2.3 km rock and steel wall will already be in place,' Mr Pederick said.

'Many people have confused the two different studies and have been falsely reassured by the mistaken belief that the government will do the required study on the weir. But most of the potential environmental damage will have been done by the time the EIS is completed. And as the plan is to leave the rock wall there for at least three years, a vast amount more damage will be done, even if the 300 metre spillway is never closed off.'

'We are now told a full EIS will be completed before 'operation' decision day in October. That's seven months. If the government had really thought this through before Premier Rann's bold

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announcement last November, they would have had ample time to complete an EIS before the construction phase begins in June.'

"It doesn't inspire any confidence in this government's planning or decision-making.'