

MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP JP

Member for Hammond

Opposition Whip

Shadow Minister for

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and Forests

Wednesday 12 May, 2010

Pederick calls on government to help farmers fight locusts

Farmers in the Riverland and Mallee are expressing a lack of confidence in the government's ability to deal with the fast-developing locust plague.

At the same time as farmers in the region were being told at public meetings that PIRSA were focused solely on the anticipated spring hatchings and were no longer surveying locust activity in the region, the Minister for Agriculture Michael O'Brien was assuring the Parliament that he was one of the best people in the country for the role.

But in answer to a question from Opposition Agriculture spokesman Adrian Pederick about his awareness of the plague, Minister O'Brien admitted he was surprised locusts had arrived in South Australia.

Mr Pederick said he believed the minister has no idea what he's up against.

'The plague threatens the recovery of many SA farmers emerging from a record drought, and is already devastating crops and pasture with unusual climatic conditions magnifying the threat,' Mr Pederick said.

'Prolonged warm weather has prompted an early hatching that will add to the spring outbreak. With early hatchings, there is a prime opportunity now to attack the plague at ground level.

'We know from previous experience that action now with the first generation of hoppers will be cheaper than a rearguard action later.

'But Minister O'Brien's department has told farmers they are preparing for spring and won't provide any assistance to them now. Farmers are on their own.

'A concerted effort now will minimise the problem in spring, but farmers need some immediate assistance.

'At very least, the government should provide the chemicals needed by farmers and councils using their own time and equipment to take immediate, positive action.

'As well as this, the government must explain the detail of its plan for the spring offensive and announce that it will support farmers.

I call on the minister to live up to his boast and show the SA farming community that he really is worthy of this important portfolio.'