

MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP

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Government inaction precipitates awful choice on lakes

Government inaction has forced the Lower lakes and all who live on or depend on them into choosing one of several unpalatable options.

Following his attendance at public meetings in Goolwa and Clayton yesterday, Shadow River Murray Minister Adrian Pederick said years of state government inaction had left us with the most awful decision that would inevitably have winners and losers.

‘It’s like a parent being asked to choose between children,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘Each one of these options leaves whole communities on the wrong side of a barrier and further accelerates the demise of the Lower Lakes.

‘We now face critical ecological dilemmas in several smaller areas including the Goolwa channel and the tributaries such as the Finniss and Currency Creek. In order to preserve and maintain the environmental integrity of these places, it appears we now have to rob Peter to pay Paul.

‘Given that in 2003 Premier Rann himself loudly proclaimed the dire situation in the lower Lakes and foresaw the looming disaster now upon us, it is truly unforgivable that what little action has been taken by his government has been left until the last minute – or as far as the lakes are concerned, after the last minute.’

Mr. Pederick further condemned both state and federal governments for failing to acknowledge the urgency of the situation and take some pro-active action.

‘At this moment, there is between 200-400 gigalitres of water available in the southern Murray-Darling Basin that could be purchased. The state government has already spent money acquiring water for other emergency purposes but fails to give the environment and all in this region the same priority.

‘A very modest amount of what’s available would buy the lakes another winter/spring rainfall season and double their chances of survival.

‘In the meantime, we are now faced with the most awful of choices as inaction has precipitated other crises.

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'In the light of the state government's inability or unwillingness to act, I call on the federal government to take control of the situation under its emergency powers and acquire the minimal amount of water required to give this internationally recognised site a better chance of survival.

'The world is watching.'

Mr Pederick urged residents around the river and lakes to attend a rally in Murray Bridge tomorrow to demand a fairer deal for the Lower Murray.

'It is vital that governments get the message that South Australians are far from satisfied with their token efforts to save the river and lakes,' he said.

The rally takes place at 4pm tomorrow in the centre of Murray Bridge at Edward Square.

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