

MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP JP

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River Murray – Sustainability and Climate Change

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests

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Minister misleads about water flows

Shadow River Murray Minister Adrian Pederick has accused State Agriculture Minister Rory McEwen of misleading South Australians about the use of River Murray flows.

Mr Pederick said Minister McEwen's claim that the environment was receiving more water than any other user – critical human needs, industry or irrigators, was a distortion of the facts.

'Minister McEwen stated the environment was receiving 350 gigalitres. He described it as "environmental flow".

'That is not correct. The 350 gl is part of the state's annual 696gl dilution flow required to maintain acceptable water quality for human consumption and irrigation. It is the barest minimum necessary to maintain acceptable salinity levels at lower Murray pump off-takes for Adelaide.

'The 350gl is not going to the environment for the environment's sake. It is an inevitable by-product of supplying critical human needs. The environment is getting it by default.

'Minister McEwen either doesn't understand this or he is deliberately misleading the public – and perhaps his government colleagues – on this vital issue.

'Even if they build the weir and flood the lakes with seawater, they'll still need that 350gl flow.'

Mr Pederick called on the state government to come clean about its actions and intentions.

'It's well past time for the state and federal governments to get serious about saving this critically important freshwater eco-system.

'There is at least 200gl of water in the southern basin that can be acquired for the lower lakes. We don't need much of that to give them a far greater chance of survival.

'And as for Water Security Minister Karlene Maywald's claim it would just evaporate, wherever it is being held in upstream inland storages it's evaporating.'