

MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP JP

Member for Hammond

Shadow Minister for

River Murray – Sustainability and Climate Change

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries – Forests

Tuesday February 3, 2009

‘Don’t stand by and let the lakes die’ says Pederick

The state opposition is urging South Australians to seize their chance to have a say about the state government’s proposal to flood the Lower Lakes with seawater.

Shadow River Murray Minister Adrian Pederick, whose electorate of Hammond covers the river below Swan Reach and most of the Lower Lakes, says the proposal, if accepted, will spell the end for one of Australia’s most important natural treasures.

‘Falling water levels through over-allocation, exacerbated by a severe drought, are exposing sulphidic soils in the lake beds. The state government has asked the federal government for permission to flood the lakes with seawater to prevent possible acidification,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘The government’s fear is the entire lake might acidify – a claim disputed by many who suggest the effects may not be terminal or unmanageable and salt water may in fact prove more ecologically disastrous in the longer term.

‘Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, such actions must be referred to the commonwealth government for approval in the light of its international commitment to protect and preserve internationally important eco-systems.

‘The Lower Lakes and Coorong constitute Australia’s largest Ramsar-listed wetland site.

‘Public input and opinion must be taken into account and Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett has called for public comments on the proposal to be submitted by February 16th.

‘I urge every South Australian with an interest in preserving our most important freshwater lakes system to put their thoughts down and submit them. The fact is a relatively small amount of water is all that is needed to tide the lakes over for another year to give Mother Nature a better chance of saving them,’ Mr Pederick said.

‘Flooding them with seawater now will definitely cause major long term damage, whereas the likelihood of widespread, uncontrollable acidification is not certain. To let seawater in, the weir will have to be built at Wellington, which will be the beginning of the end for the River Murray.

‘Rivers that don’t flow don’t live.’

The draft guidelines can be found at www.environment.gov.au/

Submissions are due by close of business Monday 16 February and can be emailed to: barrages@environment.gov.au or posted to: **Barrages comments, Environment Assessment Branch, Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, GPO Box 797, CANBERRA ACT 2601.**

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