



MEDIA RELEASE

Adrian Pederick MP

Member for Hammond

Thursday November 2nd 2006

Big response to Rural Business Forum

Almost 200 farmers and other rural business people from Strathalbyn to Pinnaroo and Swan Reach to the Meningie, heard representatives of government agencies, banks, development boards and other related organisations speak on assistance options for those affected by the drought, described by some as the worst on record.

Local MP, Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick, much of whose electorate is heavily affected by drought, organized the Rural Business Forum in Murray Bridge on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the current drought and its impact on the whole rural community.

South Australian Farmers' Federation (SAFF) President Wayne Cornish and Greg Cock of PIRSA explained the process required to apply for Exceptional Circumstances funding from the Federal Government and offered assistance to prepare such an application.

Centrelink's Krys Baker and Rural Financial Counselling Services chief Executive Kay Matthias described the special services and support mechanisms offered by their organisations and Chris Rowney of BankSA described the banking industry's willingness to work with rural clients to look for ways through the current situation.

Farmers and business people were invited visitors to describe their situations during an open discussion. Most pointed out that, while immediate assistance was vital to many, major changes to marketing structures and other inequalities in taxation and monetary policies need to be implemented to even up the playing field for rural business people and their communities.

A young farmer explained that the repeated poor years, coupled with the increasing controls on farm product sales and pricing, was giving him second thoughts about staying on the land. He added that only two of all his school friends were still farming.

Many spoke of the difference between a 'rain drought' and a 'financial drought', explaining that the latter was a far more deep-rooted problem which was within the power of legislators to correct.

Mr Pederick's proposal that a committee be formed to progress the EC application process was well received by the meeting. It will include representatives of PIRSA and SAFF and is expected to meet soon.

Mr Pederick later expressed his disappointment that State Treasurer Kevin Foley had subsequently dismissed the meeting as a 'political stunt'.

Contact: Adrian Pederick 0429 692 921

“We arranged this forum in response to the call of our rural community and were careful to invite everyone who had an interest or involvement in taking some positive action, including Mr Foley’s own Minister of Agriculture, Rory McEwen,” said Mr Pederick.

“The fact that he did not respond to our invitation and when my staff phoned to check were simply told that no-one from his office would attend is hardly a ‘political stunt’. The 200 farmers and businesspeople who did attend would have welcomed his input and contribution to the discussion.”