

Xmas message - 2008

The approach of another Christmas brings plans for family gatherings, holidays and hot days at the beach or on the river. It will be a welcome break from the year's trials.

I pay tribute to the many country people who have worked so hard to improve their own communities. You obviously take great pride in your towns, developing self-sufficiency and creating opportunities.

The mighty Murray, South Australia's spinal cord and the main vein of industry and recreation in Hammond, remains in serious trouble. As your local MP, my focus has been on fighting for a fair deal for the Lower Murray and Lakes.

Our generation will be recorded as the one that either sacrificed or saved the river, lakes and Coorong. We must not fail our children and future generations.

Other major issues in 2008 have been the Country Health changes that threatened the very fabric of rural life and the limitations of passenger transport in the region. While some ground was made on both issues, I remain watchful to see that we do not lose the services that bind our communities together.

The delay of the planned expansion of Mobilong Prison, while disappointing in itself, does at least give some opportunity for further community input. The Rural City of Murray Bridge is to be congratulated for its pro-active approach.

My role in Parliament changed substantially last September when I was appointed Shadow Minister for the River Murray, Sustainability and Climate Change, Agriculture, Food & Fisheries and Forests. I am delighted to have the opportunity to play a greater role in determining policy directions for the state.

My wife Sally, sons Mack and Angus and I wish you and your families a very enjoyable and safe Christmas. Please be careful on the roads so we can work together to make 2009 a happy year.