

RIVER MURRAY, DROUGHT COMPLIANCE – 28 Oct 2010

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:00): Seeing I can't get any answers out of the Minister for Agriculture, I will try the Minister for the River Murray. How does the government propose to maintain drought compliance and other river channel surveillance along the River Murray now that the drought compliance team has been disbanded? On 24 September, the government terminated the employment of the entire 11 member drought compliance team. The team had responsibility for checking for water theft and abuse, illegal dumping of waste and other contaminants, illegal developments, riverbank slumping and collapsed trees. With rising water levels, these risks have increased rather than decreased. It is my understanding that random patrols will be rare or non-existent and inspections will depend on incoming reports from the public.

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water) (15:01): I thank you very much for the question. Of course, he raises a very important issue; that is, that along the length and breadth of the River Murray we are able to ensure that there is compliance regarding the water that people can extract. Indeed, we have processes in place to make sure that we can identify those people who extract water and who are not supposed to extract water. Part of that is our department having linkages with the community. In respect of the specifics, which I do not have here in front of me, I think I should take the majority of that question on notice and I will certainly get back on that matter.

8 Feb 2011 - In reply to Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (28 October 2010).

The Hon. P. CAICA (Colton—Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water): I am advised that:

The Department for Water Drought Compliance Team was established specifically to ensure sustainable and lawful use of water taken from the River Murray during severe drought.

As the drought eased it was deemed that some of the additional staff employed to provide compliance and enforcement services around extraction from the River Murray could be released and responsibility for monitoring and compliance integrated into existing programs.

Although the Drought Compliance Team has now been disbanded, the Department for Water has 17 staff working within existing licensing, asset management, hazard management and investigations programs who are involved on a daily basis in monitoring, reporting, investigating and responding to licensing compliance and river bank collapse issues.