

MURRAY RIVER TOURISM - June 7, 2007

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): Will the Minister for Tourism inform the house of her reason for not supporting a major promotion of the River Murray as a tourism destination, which commenced in September 2006, in partnership with the New South Wales and Victorian governments and which is supported equally by the federal government? South Australia declined to participate in this important promotion aimed at the estimated 2.5 million Australians aged between 30 and 64 who travel frequently and take long trips. The remaining two governments each contributed the modest amount of \$250 000 to this important campaign, which is also aimed in part at South Australian based tourists.

As a direct result of South Australia's non-participation, the Murray River Wind Down campaign promoted the river only as far as the border. The campaign material states that 'the Murray tourism region encompasses two states—Victoria and NSW'. It is focused on 'the regional brand strengths of history/heritage, golf, food/wine and water-based activities'. Given the current crisis on the river, it is a cruel blow to struggling river tourism operators that travellers were encouraged to begin or end their journey at the border.

The Hon. J.D. LOMAX-SMITH (Minister for Tourism): I thank the member for Hammond for his question. He quite rightly points out the importance of River Murray tourism. Indeed, we have invested extra funds this year, because we recognise that some of the publicity that has been around in the last few months has been extremely damaging in terms of many journalists and photographers taking pictures of dry Darling River beds and dust bowls without water. That has led to some misinformation in the market. So we have refocused our targeting of Murray marketing by involving ourselves in some creative activities. For example, we run a camcorder to demonstrate that when you book there is actually water in the river. We are investing some significant funds in joint marketing with the region.

Ultimately, the issue of cross-border marketing is quite a vexed one that depends on collaboration and cooperation of the regions themselves. I am particularly keen to work across borders. I have been criticised, in fact, for jointly marketing with Tasmania, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, because it seems that there are some destinations that are bigger than state boundaries. Instinctively, I would always want to work with the three states involved in this campaign. In fact, we have run tri-state campaigns in the past. They have been successful, but they often break down at the local level. When we are involved in those local campaigns, they are not effective unless the local regional marketing boards are absolutely on side.

We do market across borders. Most of our Outback, backpacking, and wilderness marketing is done without commenting about South Australia specifically, but pushing the destination. Outback marketing might well involve the *Ghan* and the Outback, with us believing that we own the Outback and them owning the *Ghan*; and our wilderness marketing with Victoria and Tasmania involves both drive holidays and going to wilderness areas. Certainly in the past we have marketed across the three borders about which the honourable member talks, but this time the program did not get support.