

I have been the Secretary of the Murray Darling Association Region 6 for the last four years and was recently (23rd Sept 2006) appointed the South Australian Vice President of the MDA and also as a private member of the, "Australian Water Association" I am been able to attend many meetings, forums & inspections which has ensured I continue to keep abreast of what is happening in the water industry.

Soon after the last Local Government Elections a group of Councillors from Region 6 MDA (Blanchetown to the Murray Mouth) formed the Lower Murray Working Group, on which I am the Council's representative. Within the LMWG members have portfolios and mine is the re-use of water portfolio and in that roll I have contacted 616 Councils throughout Australia seeking information as to how they re-use water be it sewerage water, grey water or storm water. The LMWG examines matters relating to the River Murray, the greater Murray Darling Basin and Council then makes recommendations to both Region 6 MDA and our respective Councils. These recommendations if accepted through Region 6 and our Council's can then be put to the Annual General Meeting of the MDA and if passed put (if necessary) to either Federal or State Governments or to the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

Whilst I am still passionate about the River Murray and its environment, watching its demise is accepted with great difficulty though with the honest belief that we can repair the damage we have done and return the River to an economically and environmentally sustainable River.

At the present time we are confronted by a drought, (which has lasted for the best part of a decade), low flows from the Eastern States as the drought has really hit hard in parts of NSW and Victoria. It has also bitten deeply into the Council's coffers costing us extra work, but for many their ability to earn a living from the land has been and still is a real struggle. While South Australia is not receiving its full entitlement flow (1850 gegalitres) per year many of our irrigators continue to fight to make a decent living.

This year will be no different as SA's River Murray irrigators will be restricted to 70% of their entitlement though at the same time we must feel for some of our Eastern States irrigators some of who, though they have secure water entitlements (and must still pay license fees), will receive no water again this year. We can't afford to be complacent and must look at our own water use and lessen our reliance on River Murray water (water is, no doubt about it, the most precious resource on the planet).

With your backing and in my new position as the SA Vice President of the Murray Darling Association I will be able to continue my fight to ensure all levels of Government are working towards the same goal, a sustainable, both economically and environmentally, River Murray.

For the last ten years I have been the Co-Ordinator of the, "Mannum Big River Fishing Competition" (winner of two Mid Murray Event of the year award's) and next year will be our tenth. The competition continues to grow each year and for our tenth we hope it will be something special. I am pleased to be able to report that we have been able to donate in excess of \$20 thousand to local service organizations, \$3581.45 to the Tsunami Appeal and also assist the Mannum Progress/Promotions Association by paying its ever-increasing liability Insurance costs.

My involvement with Mid Murray Homes for the Aged Inc is ongoing and I am pleased to be able to report that we had an accreditation visit late in August and passed all forty-four of the required standards. I can finally report Mid Murray Homes for the Aged Inc., have begun to achieve their vision, to be able to provide aged and or disadvantaged housing throughout the Mid Murray Council area by having two independent living units completed at Blanchetown and we will soon be negotiating to build units in Mannum on a block of land donated by Council.

After ten years as the treasurer of the Mannum R. & S. L. Sub-Branch I did not seek re-election (in 2005) though will to continue to keep abreast of issues within the ex-service community and the Department of Veterans' Affairs and am still a registered pension/welfare officer and a peer educator.

As I have lessened some commitments I have had to re-assess my time management to increase time allotted to my commitments to Mid Murray Council and availability to my constituents; The Lower Murray Working Group; The Murray Darling Association; My investigations into the re-use of potable water; Mid Murray Homes for the Aged Inc; "Mannum Big River Fishing Competition" and Local Government Association.

I would be extremely interested on your views about your river and it's continuing health, as we must have a strong voice to lobby both Federal and State Governments to ensure it's continued ability to be able to cater for South Australia – a sustainable river.

I have begun collating a monthly publication (Snippets Plus available via Email to interested persons) and the past editions can be viewed on my Web Site along with information relating to potable re-use, my self, my Council commitments over the last six plus years.

Cr. Peter R. Smith OAM