



### **WINNERS ARE GRINNERS**

23 June 2004

Sporting bodies, community organisations and service groups will pay the \$30 a year River Murray levy instead of the \$135 a year levy.

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said she was delighted with this win for common sense by the Minister, Michael Wright.

She thanked all those who assisted by putting their concerns in writing and who persisted in highlighting the injustice and inequity of the State Government's previous stance.

All organisations registered as not-for-profit organisations under the *South Australian Associations Incorporation Act 1985* will now be classified under category 1 for the purposes of the Save The River Murray Levy and will pay the lower levy.

The Minister announced that the change will be retrospective to 1 October 2003 when the levy came into effect.

Those not-for-profit organisations that have already paid the higher levy should contact SA Water and, once their not-for-profit status has been verified, they will be given a credit on their water account.

"I am still opposed to the collection of this levy, which is just another tax imposed by the Rann Government, from Eyre Peninsula where residents do not use River Murray water.

"Nevertheless, I am pleased that the change has been made for the benefit of our not-for-profit organisations including the Cummins Sporting Complex who only face a \$90.00 bill instead of the original \$405.00".

"Those bodies that were facing possible closure may now be able to manage the lesser imposition even though none of the money that is collected will benefit this region," she said.

### **River Murray Levy and Not-for-Profit Organisations 4 June 2004**

The Member for Flinders Liz Penfold has been urging the State Government to make all not-for-profit organisations exempt or at least eligible for the reduced River Murray Levy fee of \$30 per year.

Currently only organisations recognised by the Australian Taxation Office as income tax exempt charitable bodies are eligible for the reduced fee. This does not include many country organisations such as Memorial, CWA or Lodge halls and sporting facilities that are registered as not-for-profit organisations under the *South Australian Associations Incorporation Act 1985*.

"The combined community sports facilities at Cummins have been charged 3 times at the high rate of \$135 per meter. \$405 is a lot of sausage sizzles for the volunteers in this small community who already do so much" Mrs Penfold said.

Mrs Penfold is pleased that after much lobbying the Minister for Administrative Services has written advising that he and the Minister for the River Murray have requested that officers from the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity and SA Water examine and provide advice regarding the current coverage of not-for-profit organisations.

Mrs Penfold urges all volunteers whose organisation is being charged the higher fee to write to the government and protest.

"The more the Ministers hear from ordinary volunteers about the unfairness of this \$135 tax on their facilities the more likely they are to make them exempt" she said.

### **THE STING IN THE RIVER MURRAY LEVY'S DETAIL 15 April 2004**

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said the River Murray levy is going to sting even harder for rural communities.

"The Minister for Administrative Services Michael Wright has advised that district halls, sporting clubs and other organisations must pay the full \$135 levy unless they are registered with the Australian Taxation Office as a charitable organisation.

"The Minister has the power to make exemptions to the Waterworks Act and I have asked him to use his power to cover these organisations with an exemption," she said.

"He can do this simply by writing a letter, as stated in the Act."

Mrs Penfold said Mr Wright was responding to a request for a district hall to be exempt from the levy, or to pay the reduced levy of \$30, both of which he refused.

Mr Wright said the incorporated hall committee should make a formal application to SA Water for an exemption/reduction.

He said the application should include a current Australian Taxation Office (ATO) letter confirming that the body qualifies as a charitable organisation for income tax purposes. It would also have to be demonstrated that the property is being used exclusively for charitable purposes.

Mrs Penfold said constituents who have contacted the ATO have been advised that unless the organisation is registered as a charitable organisation they are unable to assist.

"I am very concerned because country halls, bowls clubs, sporting clubs and even the CWA would probably not be registered as charitable organisations with the ATO, rather they would be registered as not-for-profit organisations under the South Australian Associations Incorporation Act 1985," she said.

Mrs Penfold said Mr Wright's interpretation is contrary to advice given by the Minister for the river Murray John Hill in a media release on 26 June 2003 stating that not-for-profit organisations would pay the lower \$30 per annum levy.

She said there is yet another sting to come from this levy. The Act states that both the \$30 and the \$135 levy are to be indexed annually by the CPI.

"I will continue to lobby the Minister and the government to have non-for-profit organisations included in the exemption so that they pay the lower levy," Mrs Penfold said.  
ENDS

## **River Murray Petition 22 March 2004**

Today Mrs. Penfold has presented the River Murray levy petition with 4,760 signatures to State Parliament. She has urged the State Government to rethink the levy and in particular its heavy handed approach to non payment of the levy.

Mrs Penfold made the plea following the number of constituents who have expressed their intention to refuse to pay the levy.

She said it was not too outlandish to predict the death of stock on farms if the advice given by the former Minister for Administrative Services Jay Weatherill was followed.

In his response, Mr Weatherill said, "I am advised that if your account is in arrears, SA Water will have to consider recovery options that could result in your water supply being restricted."

Mr Weatherill also said that late payment fees may be incurred for each quarter in which the full payment remains outstanding.

Mrs Penfold has asked the new Minister for Administrative Services, Michael Wright, to reconsider the government's heavy-handed approach.

"I understood SA Water is merely the agency that the government has decreed will collect the levy.

"Why then should constituents be threatened to have their water supply restricted and incur lay payment fees?" she asked.

Mrs Penfold described as a cop out the claim that everyone benefited from the Murray because of the produce that was grown there and that therefore everyone should pay the levy.

"Everyone in the State benefits from the export income derived from Eyre Peninsula. Using the above reckoning, everyone in South Australia should pay the Eyre Peninsula Water Catchment levy," she said.

"There has been no allowance for contiguous land or single business enterprises (other than farming businesses) resulting in some people paying the levy several times over – just another instance of social and economic injustice to rural residents."

She said it is difficult for Eyre Peninsula residents to come to terms with having to pay the River Murray levy when they do not have access to the River Murray water, they are subjected to tighter water restrictions than the rest of the state, and many are self sufficient in household water supply.

"The anger is compounded when they hear of or have seen the indiscriminate use of water along the River Murray by people who are not paying for the water and who are not paying the levy," she said.

ABC Radio precis 23/3/04

### **Strong support for a petition against Eyre Peninsula residents paying the River Murray levy**

There's been strong support for a petition against Eyre Peninsula residents paying the River Murray levy, with nearly 4,800 signatures. The petition was presented to Parliament yesterday.

Member for Flinders, Liz Penfold, describes as 'a cop out' the Government's line that everyone should pay the levy because everyone benefits from the Murray. She says that the whole state also benefits from Eyre Peninsula's export income and by that logic everyone should pay the local water catchment levy.

### **Eyre Peninsula residents angry that they're forced to pay the River Murray levy**

There's been a plea for the State Government to recognise the concerns of Eyre Peninsula residents angry that they're forced to pay the River Murray levy. A petition on the issue attracted nearly 5,000 signatures and was presented to State Parliament yesterday.

Member for Flinders, Liz Penfold says the Government can no longer ignore what's a genuine case of unfairness: "They would have to take note that there's anger out there of that magnitude and recognise the fact that everybody's got water needs and that they can't unfairly put an impost on an area like mine, which for years has been conserving water."

### **Liz Penfold, Member for Flinders Petition protesting against the River Murray levy**

*(Taylor: ... the River Murray crisis maybe eased with the introduction of water restrictions in the new River Murray levy but should everybody pay that levy? Member for Flinders, Liz Penfold says no ... her constituents should not and yesterday in State Parliament she presented a petition containing more than 4,700 signatures to say just that ... good morning ... what percentage of your constituents does that 4,700 signatures make up Liz?) ...*

well nearly 25%.

*(Taylor: ...well that's a fairly strong movement then?) ...*

its amazing ... it was amazing that that many people cared enough to find a petition and sign it ... they came in ... people are just angry ... people on Eyre Peninsula have had water restrictions well most of our lives because there's never been a great deal of water, even when I was young but now the water basin south of Port Lincoln have been drawn down far too far and there is concern that it will bring in the salt water from the sea ... instead of water bubbling out it will suck it in ... so we've been promised a desalination plant but that plant has been put off ... it was written in blood according to the Labor Minister but of course we haven't seen it yet ... they're talking about 2005-2006 but that's just the first stage and of course we need another two stages after that ... we've got problems.

*(Taylor: ...I'm going to be the devil's advocate here ... these 4,700 people who signed your petition ... its not just a hip pocket reaction ... its not missing the big picture of actually improving the health of the River Murray?) ...*

I think everybody wants to see the health of the River Murray improved but it was said to be an environmental levy and that it would be on everyone ... over on Eyre Peninsula we don't receive any of the Murray River water and the Murray River Levy is not on everyone ... the thing that particularly comes in with the phone calls and the people is the fact that most of them have relations or no people on the river ... they know the city people coming down to their shacks on the river ... they're not the volunteers that man the fire brigade when it goes out in the country or have to check stock ... they get their water for free and they don't pay the levy ...

*(Taylor: ...so who's not paying the levy Liz?) ...*

well the people who are actually using the water direct from the River don't pay the levy and don't pay for their water.

*(Taylor: ...how come?) ...*

because they ... put your shack on the water and you put your pipe in with your little pump ... just like we pump out of the dams we've constructed ... they put their pipe into the river and pull the water out and use it for their needs and of course they don't have a meter ... means they don't pay the levy and they don't pay for the water.

*(Taylor: ...but aren't they doing something illegal?) ...*

I'm not sure that that's illegal ... I've never been told that that's illegal ... people just came into my office recently and told me about the rose gardens and lawn gardens ... on some of the homes along the river and the fact that the water is being used ... when most gardens in country regions ... the farmer's garden ... have deteriorated ...

*(Taylor: ...so where are these people who live in these shacks for a couple of weeks draw this water from the River Murray without having to pay any sort of monetary value on it ... where are they coming from?) ...*

well the people who own shacks along the river ... like my farmers mostly have shacks ... on the coast of Eyre Peninsula and go down when they can ...

*(Taylor: ...so how are they not paying the levy though?) ...*

well they don't have meters ..

*(Taylor: ...then shouldn't the State Government legislate to bring these meters in for everybody?) ...*

it would be a way around it I guess ... it would be a very good idea ... what about the people up river? What about the people in the other States? ... my people just feel that we're already paying a major penalty with the cost of having to put in tanks and dams and all the restrictions we have and then there are others who are not paying for the levy and if its an environmental levy ... its being collected by SA Water ... also the Minister or the former Minister was threatening restrictions on the water supply ... that could mean that stock could be without water ...

*(Taylor: ...do you think that NSW and Victoria who also use Murray water should have some sort of level put on them as well?) ...*

of course I do ... if its on everybody ... then it should be on everybody ... not people who are already putting in a huge contribution on Eyre Peninsula ... we have on every block now in Coffin Bay, 5,500 augmentation fee for possible need for water ... that's on about 23 towns across South Australia now but not on city people ... they automatically get the water ...

*(Taylor: ...I'm with you on that ... Victorians love the Murray River ... those in the southern part of Victoria would also value very highly the Murray River ... if something happens to it then we're all going to regret that aren't we?) ...*

yes we are ... we're also going to regret if we don't get water on Eyre Peninsula because a billion dollars worth of produce comes off Eyre Peninsula ... if we contaminate our one underground water supply that's supplying all the pipelines on Eyre Peninsula then we're going to be a diabolical trouble and already there has been Government people who've been suggesting that we reduce our stock ... now that's the live hood of the people on Eyre Peninsula

*(Taylor: ...will the Government take note?) ...*

its just under 5,000 signatures and that's only in four weeks and I put a date on it ... I'm sure there's going to be another few that come in in the next few weeks ...

*(Taylor: ...so you would expect the Government to come in and take note of this?) ...*

I would think that they'd have to take note ... there's anger out there ... recognise the fact that everybody has got water needs and that they can't unfairly put an impost on an area like mine which for years has been conserving water ...

## **THE RIVER MURRAY LEVY 19 February 2004**

The River Murray levy is simply another revenue raiser for the Labor State Government and is discriminatory to Eyre Peninsula.

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said these comments are repeated time and again by outraged constituents, particularly as River Murray water is not available on Eyre Peninsula.

"The levy is paid by SA Water clients, with the exception of those along the River Murray who take waster direct from the river".

"These users, along with SA Water clients who actually use River Murray water, should be most concerned about the supply and should therefore be bearing the brunt of the cost of action," she said.

"The levy is particularly galling on Eyre Peninsula where we are already paying a water catchments levy, still have severe water restrictions and have had to fight for reasonable water services and maintain them".

"Communities on Eyre Peninsula have really taken the severity of the region's water supplies to heart and have more then complied with water restrictions. Many have installed additional rain water tanks and taken other measures at considerable personal cost to ensure that our water supplies are sustainable. They now feel they are being further discriminated against by having to pay a River Murray levy", Mrs Penfold said.

"In addition blocks in some of our towns are also being charged an 'augmentation fee' of \$5,500.00 by SA Water over and above of the cost to be connected to the mains supply", she said.

This is despite SA Water amassing huge profits of \$258 million in 2002-03 and contributing \$243 million to the State Labor Government's already bulging coffers.

"The Government has a responsibility through the Community Service Obligation to provide basic infrastructure for all South Australians not just those who live in the right place", Mrs Penfold said.

Mrs Penfold and her staff spent hours daily answering constituents complaints about the unjustness of the levy and the poor business administration.

She gave the following examples:

- SA Water accounts state that the levy is for a period for the 3 months from January to March instead of the 6 months October to March which was both confusing and alarming since it indicates that the levy is much higher than publicised.
- Businesses that operate as one entity but occupy more than one property should be able to consolidate their properties. Small rural businesses do not need the extra financial burden or paperwork.
- Self funded retirees who are ineligible for the concessions that apply to pensioners, pay the full levy.
- The Minister has stated that charitable and non-profit organisations would pay the residential rate of \$30 however accounts have been sent for the commercial rate causing considerable time, paperwork and stress in correcting the account mostly undertaken by volunteers.

"This whole fiasco once again demonstrates the Labor Government's disregard for rural and regional South Australia".

"I am distributing a petition to the Parliament and constituents can be assured that I will continue to fight for justice and equality on their behalf", she said.

Mrs Penfold said that constituents could express their dissatisfaction by phoning 1300 307 079 and asking for Minister John Hill's office or by writing to him at Parliament House, Adelaide.

Petitions are available from the Flinders Electorate Office, from Liz's website [www.lizpenfold.com](http://www.lizpenfold.com) or by phoning 1800 622 329.