



# A Fairer Deal for the Lower Murray

**Get it hot off the press**

BE one of the first people in the Murraylands to buy a River and Lakes Ambassador blue ribbon at today's barbecue in the main streets of Murray Bridge, Mannum and Meningie.

Keep an eye out for the blue ribbons tied around signposts and trees on Randell Street, Mannum, Bridge Street, Murray Bridge, and Lions Park, Meningie.

Join The Standard for a sausage sizzle cooked by Lions clubs from each town from 12noon to 1pm.



**About the Murray Darling Basin**

- The basin's area is 1,061,469 square kilometres, 14 per cent of Australia's total area
- The major rivers of the basin are Australia's three longest, the River Murray (2530km), Darling River (2740km) and Murrumbidgee River (1575km)
- The Coorong and Lower Lakes is one of 15 Ramsar listed wetlands in the basin
- There are more than 30,000 wetlands throughout the basin
- Wool, cotton, wheat, sheep, cattle, dairy, rice, oil-seed, wine, fruit and vegetables are produced throughout the basin
- The basin contains about 40 per cent of Australia's agricultural production
- 85pc of Australia's irrigation happens in the Murray Darling Basin



**Devastating:** An empty tortoise shell encrusted with tubeworm. Photo courtesy The Times.

# Tortoises necks are on the line

TORTOISES attacked by the parasitic tubeworm have become one of the many victims of the drought in the River Murray.

Many long and short-necked tortoises have been left to die in and around the lakes Alexandrina and Albert after becoming encrusted with the tubeworm.

Empty tortoise shells have been left lying on the sandy beaches, which now surround the lakes.

The highly saline water of the Lower Lakes is a breeding ground for the tube-

worm, which really began having a noticeable impact earlier this year as salinity levels headed into the 3000 to 4000 electrical conductivity.

Tubeworm can also survive in freshwater but it is not as prolific.

The tortoises are just another signal that the ecosystem has changed in the Lower Lakes.

The parasite attaches to the shell of the tortoises and creates a hard calcium mass, which can be up to several centimetres thick.

The calcified mass weighs down tortoise and covers the openings to the shell, restricting the animal's capacity to feed and move.

Fortunately, many hundreds of the tortoises have been rescued from the fatal tubeworm.

Community groups, such as the Mannum to Wellington Local Action Planning Association, have been cleaning the tortoises of the tubeworm and releasing them back into the fresh water of the River Murray, rather than the Lower Lakes.

# Fleurieu gives support for campaign

By Claire Thwaites, The Times

SISTER paper to The Standard, The Victor Harbor Times based on the Fleurieu Peninsula, has also been campaigning for action for the river.

With the spotlight on the Lower Lakes, and various rallies and public information sessions being held in the region, the Goolwa community have been extremely vocal in their request for more water.

Action group 'Goolwa needs water now' has organised various rallies and stunts, including bucketing salt water over to the fresh waterside of the Goolwa barrages in an attempt to show how desperate they are to raise the Goolwa pool level.

The businesses in Goolwa, Hindmarsh Island, and along the river in Clayton and Milang, are feeling the impact of having no water, with tourism numbers in Goolwa dropping and people pulling out of business.

The plight of the tortoises is another issue that has been thrust into the spotlight as an example of the damage caused to the environment by the high levels of salinity.

Students from various schools in the region along with other volunteers have spent hours scrubbing the tortoises clean of the tubeworm that has attached itself to their bodies, inhibiting their movement.

The Times also conducted a River Murray survey, asking those in the

community to share their thoughts on the river, the actions of the local council and State and Federal governments, and what solutions people would like to see.

A huge 97 per cent of readers who filled in the survey, completed two weeks ago, said they would like to see the State Government declare the river a "state of emergency".

Also 94pc of people surveyed said they were unhappy with the way the governments have managed the issues in the Lower Lakes and Coorong.

In addition to this, 95.8pc of respondents said they did not think that given the urgency of the situation, governments had worked in an appropriate timely manner.



**Desperate:** Goolwa residents bucket salt water over to the fresh water side of the barrages to try and raise river levels.