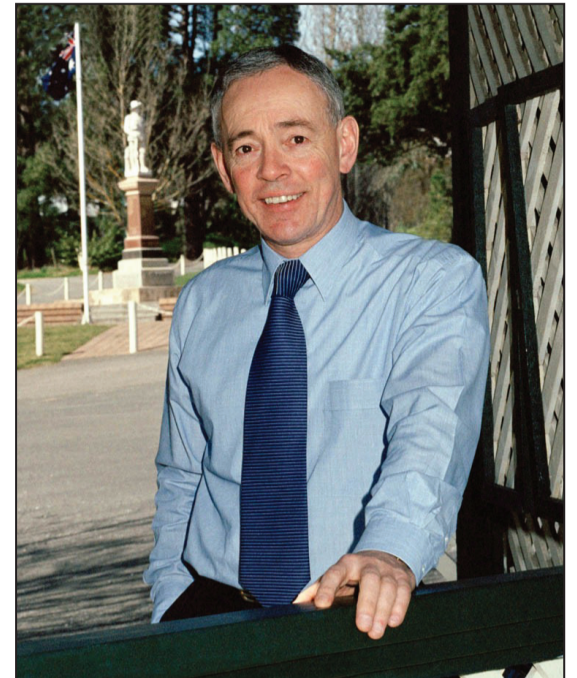


Curse of the safe seat

Here we go again. Another election, another round of promises concerning the River Murray. Hands up all those who believe something will happen this time. Thought so.

Despite the recognition that water is probably the single most important challenge facing this country, all we get is lip service. Why is this? And what needs to be done to change it?

I call it ‘the curse of the safe seat’. The entire length of the River Murray in SA is in the Federal seat of Barker which has been a safe seat since it came into being (when did you last see a major party focus on the needs of a safe seat?) It’s a curse living in a seat where the sitting member can’t lose. Do you think if Barker was a marginal seat that one of the major parties *had* to win to form government there’d be more action on the River? You bet there would. Hence the comment in The Advertiser about SA being “overlooked” at this election. No marginal seats, no attention.



SA currently has one Senator who is independent of the two major parties (Nick Xenophon). Imagine what we could do if we had *two* independent Senators representing the interests of South Australia. You’d start seeing some action on the River then.

So why is this of particular concern to Family First? Because it is about the food we eat and the water we drink. South Australian families should be able to put fresh food on the table and get clean water out of the tap - at prices that do not burden low and middle income families. Then there’s the health and sustainability of the river system itself. The government has said it won’t release its most up-to-date Murray Darling Basin Plan until after the election. What is it afraid of?

“This is about fresh food and clean water. Families should be able to put fresh food on the table and get clean water out of the tap.”

But of course none of this is new. Back in the 1950s, NSW and Victoria tried to divert water from the Murray into the proposed Jindabyne Dam under the Snowy River Agreement. The SA Premier at the time, Sir Tom Playford promptly took out a High Court writ demanding that SA be part of the Agreement. Tom Playford took the fight right up to then Prime Minister Robert Menzies and won. And both were Liberals! Sir Tom didn’t care. For him it was SA first, the Liberal Party second.

The problems of the River are not engineering problems or agricultural problems. They are political problems. An article in *The Nation* newspaper in 1959 reported, “*Playford’s visits to Canberra are always good Press. He is one representative of his State who goes east and wins*”.

Where are the modern day Tom Playfords when you need them? Not sitting in safe seats that’s for sure.

If you are as concerned about this as I am then August 21 is your chance to do something about it.

Bob Day
Senate Candidate
FAMILY FIRST