

**Submission from The Boating Industry Association of South Australia Inc,
Adelaide, SA**

Submission Number: 210

Public Submission received by Email to Drought Policy Review 18/08/08:

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Chair
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Drought Policy Review
GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2601

14 August 2008

**Assessment of the social impacts of drought and related government and non-government
social support services**

Drought Impact; Tourism/Leisure/Boating; Lower Murray, Lakes and Coorong.

Dear Peter

The existing and continuing drought conditions and “over extraction” practises impacting within the Murray-Darling Basin are having a wide-ranging, negative and significant impact on lives and livelihoods across much of Australia.

In South Australia:

- primarily on all River Murray inland waters below Lock 1 (at Blanchetown)
- through to the Murray Mouth at Goolwa,

The recreational boating and leisure/holiday sectors are suffering enormously.

We applaud the initiative of the Rudd Government in establishing a comprehensive evaluation of the social impacts of drought and we sincerely hope that this paper, written on behalf of a large number of businesses and around forty rural communities of the Australian Tertiary Industry Sector will be passed on, with other papers that you will receive, to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at the end of September 2008.

We need to formally reconfirm that, at present, over forty communities located within the Lower Murray, Lower Lakes and Coorong areas are drastically affected by the lowering of water levels, increased levels of salinity and issues connected with acid-sulphate soils.

These communities, which, to a large extent rely on the tourism and leisure sectors, are generally located within the following Local Government Areas:

- City of Murray Bridge,
- DC Alexandrina,
- DC Coorong
- DC Karoonda East Murray
- DC Mid Murray and
- DC Victor Harbor

We are very concerned that many more communities located within the Basin, “above” Lock 1 will also be critically affected, should the ongoing drought/lack of adequate flow conditions continue/worsen in the future.

These LGAs include, in South Australia, but are not restricted to:

- DC Renmark Paringa
- DC Berri Barmera
- DC Loxton Waikerie

Please accept this brief note to confirm:

- That forward (commercial) houseboat and charter bookings have never been worse, and the fleet is presently operating at around 50% of normal capacity. This delivers a negative impact of around \$15Million annually
- That the use of the (privately) owned houseboat and cruising fleets is also down, by at least, 50% and this delivers a negative impact of around \$25Million annually
- That general holiday, leisure and recreational boating is way down in the Lakes and Coorong areas as people anticipate “no water at all” within the Lower River, Lakes Albert and Alexandrina and the Coorong, and
- That with these conditions, and the cancellation of lockages at Goolwa, boats are relocating from River and Lakes’ marinas to marinas upstream and to coastal moorings
- That more than 500 large (generally normally non trailerable craft) which offer overnight accommodation and/or galley services have gone
- That the economic loss, incorporating aspects of boat servicing/fuelling and provisioning is estimated to be in the order of \$5Million annually
- That the negative economic impact precipitated by the loss of revenues on moorings/berthing is estimated to be in the order of \$2Million annually
- That “boating” and other “water based” day trippers and holiday makers numbers are down with a loss to the economy of at least \$200Million annually
- That all the snags that were deep below the surface are now presenting as serious hazards which have resulted in the crippling of numerous craft
- That most marinas, slips and ramps are now unserviceable/out of business

In brief, so far as the tourism and leisure sectors and the boat sales/boat repair/ and boat service/boat hire and boat charter sectors are concerned, things have never appeared so dismal. This is reflected in the serious downturns experienced by our “40 communities”.

Little consideration has been given to these 40 South Australian communities which have a significant level of commercial reliance with recreational, leisure and holiday boating.

We must understand:

- the heartbreak of the owners, managers, and staff of such small (generally family owned) businesses of rural Australia, many of whom have spent decades, in some cases generations, in developing their assets and the reputation of their businesses
- the increasing numbers of “boating industry connected people” and those individuals from “related operations:
 - the caterers,
 - the fuellers,
 - the cleaners and the moppers,
 - those who build, sell, service and maintain the boats,
 - the local provisioning and supporting organisations
 - the caravan parks
 - the B&Bs
 - the hotels and motels
 - the cruise operators
 - the marinas
 - the charter businesses
 - the boat hire operators
 - the slipway operators
 - the pubs
 - the grocer shops
 - the green groceries
 - the dellies
 - the newsagents
 - the bakeries
 - the sellers of fuel and
 - the purveyors of tackle and bait and
 - all the others

... Are joining the ranks of the unemployed.

The social costs, the damages to “lives” and relationships and to the capital equipment and the infrastructure are inestimable.

I would be delighted to discuss this paper at any time.

Yours sincerely

Glen Jones
General Manager