

MURRAY RIVER FISH KILL

**161. Hon RICK MAZZA to the minister representing the Minister for Water:**

I refer to the circumstances of the May 2017 fish kill in the Murray River.

- (1) What is the lead agency for fish kills in river ways and estuaries, the Department of Water or the Department of Fisheries?
- (2) Was an investigation undertaken?
- (3) If yes to (2) —
  - (a) what samples of fish and water were taken, and when;
  - (b) what tests were done on the samples and what were the results;
  - (c) what site observations were taken, and when;
  - (d) what is the estimated number of fish deaths to date;
  - (e) what are the government's conclusions as to the causes of the fish kill; and
  - (f) can the minister direct me to a copy of the report?
- (4) If no to (2), why not?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. The Minister for Water; Fisheries provided the following answer.

- (1) It is the Department of Water.
- (2) Yes.
- (3)
  - (a) Fish, water and phytoplankton samples were taken on 24 May 2017. Water samples and phytoplankton were also taken on 30 May 2017.
  - (b) Fish pathology samples included analysis of gills and organs. The results were inconclusive due to the poor sample quality. Testing using this method requires immediate sampling of dying fish, and as the event occurred overnight, limited suitable samples were available at the time of investigation. Water quality sampling results support the conclusion that fish deaths were likely due to low dissolved oxygen levels overnight. Phytoplankton samples indicate that the phytoplankton species and density present were unlikely to have contributed to the event.
  - (c) Site observations were taken from the shore on 24 May 2017 and 26 May 2017 and from a boat on 25 May 2017 at Yunderup Reach in the Murray River. Observations included atmospheric and tidal observations, as well as the extent and spread of dead fish.
  - (d) It is 30 000.
  - (e) The fish appear to have died of a temporary change to low oxygen conditions in that reach of the river.
  - (f) No.
- (4) Not applicable.