



The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP

Liberal Member for Murray



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22nd April 2016

Dear s 22

As you probably have heard, I have decided not to recontest the next federal election. After seven elections and 20 years, it is time to pass on the baton to the next Liberal member for Murray. This was a really hard decision, but I was so pleased when some excellent candidates for Liberal preselection stepped forward. Your Liberal candidate will be Duncan McGauchie and he is hard at work.

Every day of the 20 years I served has been a privilege and an honour to work for you as one of the 130,000 constituents of Murray.

In my maiden speech on the 6th of May 1996 I said that: "The people of Murray electorate are accustomed to long, hard roads and to overcoming what others would see as insurmountable odds." I was referring to previous droughts, floods and fires, to name a few natural disasters. I must confess I did not anticipate that we would quickly fall into the worst drought on record, followed by two of the worst floods on record, one covering the west and then one covering the east of the electorate! The real community spirit and volunteer strength of our region shone through.

Over the 20 years so much has happened. Just a few highlights:

- We stopped the Fire Blight infected NZ apples flooding into our markets.
- I had the Federal regulations changed to allow irrigators in a drought declared region to also be eligible for Federal Exceptional Circumstances payments. Murray then received over \$120million in support, saving many families and their communities.
- I landed the federal funding for the upgrade of the GV Highway, with more than \$550m making it the best freeway in regional Australia. They said it would never happen.
- I won the new federally funded Department of Rural Health and Clinical School for the Goulburn Valley, despite Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat's bid. Now the University of Melbourne purpose built campus, clinic and student accommodation produces great doctors who have placements in all our nearby towns.
- Federal funding helped to build the new La Trobe University Campus in Shepparton.
- The millions in funding for new trade training centres in schools in Numurkah, Nathalia, Yarrawonga, Echuca, and Shepparton (construction to start soon) was great.
- It was so good to deliver the multiple millions of dollars for hundreds of new beds, new buildings, dementia wards and extra in-home help for our elderly and our aged care facilities in Shepparton, Mooropna, Echuca, Euroa, Pyramid Hill, Tongala, Tatura, Euroa and Violet Town.

- The Federal funding for the new Echuca, Boort, Numurkah and Euroa hospitals, and for the new Koorie Aged Care Complex have brought us up to date.
- Much needed funding to upgrade Elmore's Field day site.
- \$7million of Federal funding for the new Sports Precinct in Shepparton.
- War memorial and precinct upgrades in almost all of our 62 small towns and two cities. We have seven VCs and they are all now suitably honoured or soon to be.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars granted directly to our councils through John Howard's new Roads to Recovery and accident black spot programs.
- Over 100 young local sporting champions and teams granted awards to help fund their training.
- Saving the jobs of SPC and our orchards by taking a stand against the Prime Minister triggered the massive media and public response which then generated Dennis Napthine's State contribution, and CCA's support. We did it, jobs were saved.
- I was proud to co-sponsor the Medicinal Cannabis Bill, now Federal Law.
- I ensured the GMWPC2 midterm review was not another desktop white-wash. The mid-term review then became pivotal for identifying the need for a "reset".
- I have ensured the Federal Government is closely in touch with the "reset" process, requiring the final agreement to have irrigator and system viability as the key.
- I have insisted no more irrigator water leaves the GMID for the Commonwealth Water Holder's Bucket. I have the water Act changed so CEWH does not have to buy water with profits from trading.

And of course there have been hundreds of smaller grants for our clubs and teams, through the Small Equipment and Stronger Regions grants. Few places have missed out. Our mobile phone access has gone from bad to good. Our bulk billing has gone from one of the lowest rates to average now.

There is still so much to do of course. Our youth unemployment and shortage of labour in key sectors is a real problem, we have to keep our water to take advantage of the new markets in the Free Trade Agreements, to allow our area to continue to be the food bowl of Australia.

It has been a wonderful 20 years working for the place and the people I love. I am happy to pass the baton on to Duncan McGauchie.

My very best wishes for yours and your family's future,

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Hon Dr Sharman Stone.



Sharman with Duncan McGauchie



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