**DPI gets a tongue lashing from Constance**

NSW Treasurer and member for Bega, Andrew Constance has called the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) proposals for netting in Merimbula’s Top Lake “ludicrous and clumsy.”

“I am dead set against this,” I raised this with the Minister (Katrina Hodgkinson, Minister of Primary Industries) yesterday (Thursday, May 8),” Mr Constance said on Friday.

It is understood that Mr Constance is particularly unhappy with the way the proposals were split out under the radar and not communicated to his office even though it could have a serious impact on a large section of his electorate.

“There has been a lack of foresight into how the community would react. This is ludicrous and clumsy and I want this killed. For Merimbula it needs to be ruled out straightaway,” Mr Constance said.

He was in Merimbula to speak with protesters of the netting proposals, and will be returning to Parliament with around 2300 signatures from locals and visitors to present to Ms Hodgkinson.

He said: “The community has been highly agitated. This is a sensitive issue but let’s keep the pressure on. I am very unhappy with the way this process has rolled out. The DPI needs to be put on notice.”

There are believed to be about 40 commercial fishing licences along the coast between the border and Batemans Bay but at a meeting on Thursday, May 8 between commercial fishermen and the fisheries officials at Eden it was clear that the commercial fishermen are not happy either.

Mr Constance said: “There has to be a balance struck but the bottom line is no one wants to see netting in Merimbula Lake. The DPI has stirred every one up unnecessarily.”

It is believed that NPWS is also annoyed about the proposals which include Bournda Lagoon.

Natalie Godward, president of the Merimbula Chamber of Commerce said that the subject “was on everyone’s lips” at the recent meeting of the Far South Coast Chambers of Commerce.

**New service for Pambula ED**

Pambula Hospital is introducing a state-of-the-art point of care testing (PoCT) program that will give Emergency Department patients faster access to pathology results and improve overall care.

The hand-held PoCT devices look like TV remotes, and provide on-site analysis for blood gases, lactate, haemoglobin, troponin, chemistries and electrolytes and INR/PT – some of the most commonly performed pathology tests emergency teams rely on.

It means the emergency staff don’t have to wait for results if pathology labs are closed overnight.

Heather Austin, general manager Bega Valley Health Service, said that Merimbula’s new Pambula Hospital had been using the equipment for one month, with results in handprint printouts that the nurses then turn around to put into a patient record.

“Having this new point of care device with the ED means results are available in real time electronically so we have the most up to date information on the status of the patient,” Ms Austin said. “We can make quicker clinical decisions and improve time to treatment.”

“It also means our nursing staff is saving time in record keeping and can direct more of their efforts into patient care.”

NSW Health Pathology is leading the state-wide effort to introduce the managed point of care testing (PoCT) scheme in public hospital emergency departments that don’t have access to 24-hour pathology laboratories on-site.

The aim is to provide ED teams, particularly in rural and regional areas, with access to on-the-spot results for certain types of pathology tests so they can deliver more timely care for patients.

The Southern Local Health District is the latest to adopt the program and is working with Pathology West (one of five NSW Health Pathology Networks) to introduce 14 devices across 11 emergency departments by the middle of May 2014.

The hospital will introduce one new device today, Wednesday, to support patient care.

**Online story prompts help for cancelled cruise couple**

A sharp-eyed Flight Centre staff manager spotted the News Weekly’s story about Paul and Patricia Martin’s cancelled cruise and the angst it had caused and now the company has offered to repay some of the money.

Following the story about Paul and Patricia Martin’s cancelled cruise in the News Weekly, May 7, the newspaper was contacted by the Flight Centre’s area leader for the ACT and south coast, Edwina Chambers, who was anxious to speak with Mr and Mrs Martin.

The couple, of Millingandi, had to cancel their cruise on the Queen Mary 2 after Mr Martin developed a brain tumour. They had hoped to get some recompense from the travel insurance they had with Zurich, through their travel agents.

But they were told that the condition was pre-existing despite Mrs Martin having been in remission for five years.

The Flight Centre, with whom Mr Martin booked the holiday, refunded $8.92 of the $426 booked the holiday, refunded $8.92 of the $426 to the Woollahra office when they phoned the hotel in Hong Kong.

However, the hotel in Hong Kong, usually we wouldn’t do this but these were extraordinary circumstances.

Mr Martin said: “Edwina has been absolutely beautiful. It’s a lot better than it was looking. This is the power of the press and it’s pretty good.”

Ms Chambers said: “They will still be out of pocket about $1700-1800 but it’s a lot better than $6500.”

**Merimbula meeting May 27, 6.30pm Lakeview Hotel**

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The deadline for submissions to the DPI has been extended from May 19 to May 30 and Mrs Godward said that the Merimbula chamber would be making a submission.

The matter will also be discussed at the Merimbula Tourism open meeting at the Lakeview Hotel, May 27, 6.30pm.