

**LIFE JACKETS**  
**23 July 2008**

**The Hon. D.G.E. HOOD:** I have been contacted by the family of Stephen Walker regarding his recent tragic death by drowning after he fell from a small motor boat. Stephen was a newlywed who had lived all his life in Mingbool near Mount Gambier. During an afternoon outing to the Glenelg River in Victoria this Easter Sunday just gone, he fell overboard and unfortunately was lost. I cannot begin to understand the trauma his poor family went through. His mother has written to me, and I quote from her letter as follows:

'The law in Victoria was that he should have been wearing a life jacket, but none of us knew this. Had this also been the law in South Australia I'm sure he would have had his life-jacket on.'

The family was forced to endure a 2½ day search for Stephen's body, which was ultimately recovered in 12 metres of water.

A life jacket was stored in the boat according to South Australian regulations, but unlike Victorian laws it was not required to be worn. If South Australian law required the life jacket to be worn, the family believe that Stephen may very well be alive today, and they have told me that he was 'a stickler for the law' and would have been wearing the life jacket if he was required to do so.

Understandably, the family would be keen to see some small good coming from this tragedy and they are beginning a campaign to see lifejacket laws tightened in South Australia and made nationally consistent. My questions are:

1. Will the minister agree to meet with Stephen's family to discuss the incident and how future tragedies such as this can be avoided?
  
2. Will the minister commit to an investigation into life jacket regulations in this state, with a comparison with interstate laws, with a view to preventing similar senseless deaths in the future?

**The Hon. P. HOLLOWAY (Minister for Police, Minister for Mineral Resources Development, Minister for Urban Development and Planning):** Let me add my commiserations to the family of the person who was lost. Obviously, the wearing of life jackets is desirable for anyone who is out in any depth of water, and particularly those who cannot swim strongly. I will refer this important question to the Minister for Transport and bring back a reply.