

Protect from viruses

RESIDENTS and visitors of north-west Victorian are being warned to protect themselves from mosquito-borne diseases such as Ross River virus and Barmah Forest virus.

Both diseases can cause symptoms including joint pain and stiffness, headache, fever, rash and fatigue.

Ross River virus has been detected in mosquitos in urban Mildura.

Avoiding mosquito bites is the best protection from Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses, with protective measures including regularly using mosquito repellent containing picaridin or DEET on all exposed skin, wearing long, loose fitting clothing when outside, and ensuring accommodation, including tents, is properly fitted with mosquito netting or screens.

Doctors are advised to consider the possibility of mosquito-borne disease in patients presenting with a compatible illness, especially after travel to rural or regional Victoria.

A blood test early in the illness can indicate potential acute infection and should be repeated two weeks later for confirmation.

A range of information relating to protecting against mosquito bites is available on the Beat the Bite campaign page on the Better Health Channel.

Bold new state

JENNY DENTON

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THE Liberal Democrat Member for Northern Victoria Tim Quilty stopped in the Gannawarra Shire on a four-day tour of the region last week.

One of five members representing Northern Victoria in State Parliament's upper house, Mr Quilty, who was elected in 2018, said he had been planning a trip to the Mallee for a year-and-a-half, but had had to postpone it several times.

"The number one reason (for the visit) was just to get out here and see the issues and talk to people," he said, speaking on the bank of the Murray River at Koondrook last Monday.

Also high on the MP's agenda was the promotion of a plan to create a new state – a regional secession he has dubbed "Rexit".

The former Albury accountant said when he was first elected, he thought the secession of northern Victoria and southern NSW was a possibility but he now considered it necessary and inevitable.

"I intend to push this idea very hard in the next two years up to the state election, and then provided we can demonstrate some support for the idea from that, to push for a referendum in 2024 to line up with the council elections," he said.

In his maiden speech to Parliament last year, Mr Quilty described himself as in favour of "smaller government, lower taxes (and) greater personal freedom", including increased speed limits, "sensible" firearms laws, drug reform and opposing new national parks.

In the speech, he held city-based



Tim Quilty with Central Murray Environmental Floodplains Group president Geoff Kendall on the Murray River at Koondrook.

Picture: JENNY DENTON

governments accountable for most problems affecting rural and regional communities, including the impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan.

"City people want to send water down the Murray to evaporate in the lower lakes of South Australia while, with the irrigation rights removed, our own small country towns wither and die," he told the parliament.

In Gannawarra last Monday, most of Mr Quilty's time was spent touring the area with campaigners from the Central Murray En-

vironmental Floodplains Group (CMEFG).

The group were keen to show him problems – including riverbank erosion, weed growth and dense thickets of redgum seedlings - that they attribute to environmental watering carried out under the plan.

"We're really keen to get the people who are making decisions to come out and see for themselves what's happening," the group's president, Geoff Kendall, said.

"He now has a visual understanding of what problems the basin

plan has caused to farmers and land and the environment."

Mr Quilty described what he had seen as "confronting" and said he would try to talk to the government about it.

There was cautious approval from the group regarding the "Rexit" plan.

It was "a bit of left field thinking" that had merit, Mr Kendall said.

"Whether it's achievable or not I'm not sure."

Mr Quilty's itinerary also took him to Sea Lake, Swan Hill and Mildura.

A NSW-VICTORIAN

BORDER BUBBLE

IS NOW IN PLACE

Victorian and New South Wales border residents will be able to travel into Victoria by showing their driver's licence or other formal photo ID, to access the services they need.

Travel delays are expected, so please plan ahead.

STAY SAFE

STAY OPEN

For more information visit
[CORONAVIRUS.vic.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au)

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne

