



Mokoan's end draws near

By **PETER HUNT**

THE last act in the Victorian Government's nine-year battle to pull the plug on Lake Mokoan is about to end.

Goulburn Murray Water will soon award the contract to bulldoze the lake's embankment.

But work still hasn't started on the \$20 million reversion of the lake to an 8000ha wetland, which the Government hopes to turn into a world-class tourist attraction.

In the meantime, local landholder Doug Bain says the long wait has left a legacy of weeds and vermin that GMW has neglected to control.

Mr Bain said it seemed GMW had wound back its spraying, vermin and maintenance programs ever since the Government rejected a com-



munity bid to retain at least part of the lake in December 2007.

"If some action isn't taken now, the problem will become far worse and the Government will end up spending a large part of its money just getting the weeds and vermin under control," Mr Bain said.

"Not to mention the huge

fire risk on the site."

Ironically, a fire broke out on the lake bed on Monday.

But GMW land manager David Jackson said GMW had boosted its weed control efforts as the drought exposed greater areas of Lake Mokoan's bed.

"For example, at Mokoan the programs include increasing the lake bed area available for grazing leases, along with increased weed-spraying and fox-baiting in partnership with DPI," Mr Jackson said.

"We are experiencing similar issues at several of our 17 storages across northern Victoria and our weed and pest management programs have stepped up in response.

"However, not all the plant growth is weeds and at Mokoan we have seen the return of beneficial wetland vegetation."



Taking over: Doug Bain with weeds at Lake Mokoan. Picture: GREG SCULLIN