

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2012

### UPPER SOUTH EAST DRYLAND SALINITY AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT (POSTPONEMENT OF EXPIRY) AMENDMENT BILL

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 15 November 2012.)

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:23 ):** I rise to speak to the Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management (Postponement of Expiry) Amendment Bill 2012. I note the comments made when we last sat here by the member for MacKillop, who is the member for the area where this drainage work has been happening. He noted in his speech, and I will say it in mine, that we on this side of the house certainly will not be supporting this piece of legislation and there is a range of reasons for that.

Drainage works, and private drainage works especially, have taken place in the Lower South-East and the Upper South-East over many years. While I accept that this bill is linked to the drains north of Naracoorte and up through to Salt Creek, there is much work being done through the Lower South-East as well.

I look at the work that Murray McCourt instigated in 1957 with the Woakwine Cutting, with a workman whose name was Dick MacIntyre, when they worked for three years, day and night, with a D7 bulldozer, a ripper and a towed scoop, to dig out the Woakwine Cutting and open up swampland down near Lake George near Beachport. It was quite a major operation to get that land dewatered. It is a very steep cutting—

Mr Pengilly interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** Yes, Murray McCourt. The cutting is not quite 30 metres deep, and it is about 36 metres wide at the top and cuts down to about three metres wide at the bottom, and it has made those swamps a very valuable asset to that family. I would also like to make mention of the works of another major landholder in the South-East (the area this bill affects), Tom Brinkworth, and the work he did in regard to drains down there, in order to drain water up towards the Coorong to the Salt Creek area.

I remember going down there when they had a day when you could tour around the work Tom had instigated. They had Opera in the Wetlands, and it was a fantastic evening. Once we had gone down and inspected the area, we had a drive around to

see the work that had been done with massive scrapers and excavators, and then, to top it off, there was this grand event held outdoors.

I will never forget the site of two big Komatsu bulldozers—about equivalent to a D11, for the Caterpillar fans out there. There was one each side of the stage and, at the appropriate time, they both lifted their blades together. If you have a bit of diesel in your veins, it was something worth seeing. It just showed the dedication.

Murray McCourt and Tom Brinkworth are just two individuals who have partaken in that work, and the work was done to make land more productive. I know there were a lot of issues in these drains, around having access to cut. One of these drains originally was going to go through the Messent Conservation Park, and this was obviously causing a lot of problems with the environment department. In the end, it did not happen.

I note that Messent has not been managed that well since then, because there was a planned burn-off there in recent times, and let us just say they overachieved quite successfully; they were going to burn about a quarter of the park but burned most of it, so you have to wonder what happens sometimes.

In regard to the legislation, the original legislation had a sunset clause of four years, and the minister at the time was sure that the project would be managed and finished appropriately. The minister of the day said:

The certainty of alignment will enable the drainage component of the scheme to be completed quickly.

I also note the comments of the member for Mount Gambier about compulsory acquisition. The minister went on to say, 'All of these alignments are to be acquired at no cost by force of the legislation.' Like the member for Mount Gambier and the member for MacKillop, I find it abhorrent in the extreme that the government thinks it can just walk in and acquire land and not pay the appropriate compensation. I say that from a little bit of experience.

I have mentioned this in the past, but I did not have the exact article from *The Mail* in 1950, in which my grandfather, Len Pederick, talked about the second home up at Angle Vale he had lost in 11 years due to compulsory acquisition. He lost the first land in 1939 for the munitions dumps and then in 1950 for the Edinburgh air base. My father thought he had got around compulsory acquisition when he moved down to Coomandook in 1961 and within only 10, 11 or 12 years, from memory, the highway needed to be deviated, so there was more compulsory acquisition. Thankfully, it was only about seven acres out the front and it was appropriately compensated at about two and a half times the value at the time.

If there is any acquisition for something like this—and from what I understand, this drain is a line through the landscape with 100 metres either side, so it would be a significant acreage taken up for this project—I believe farmers should be adequately compensated. I note that this bill was debated back in December 2002 and the scheme was due to be completed by 2006 and was not completed until 2011. It was always, I believe, the intent of the act to hand control over this scheme to the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board. That could easily be done because they have been managing the rest of the drainage scheme in the South-East and I am talking about drains that were dug way back in the 1860s and were still being dug in the 1870s.

I note the comments made by the member for Mount Gambier today about the South East Flows Restoration Project and the minister talked about how one of the reasons for retaining the act might be that it could serve as a vehicle for that program. We would like to see some better outcomes in regard to getting water into the Coorong, but we want to see the right outcomes and we believe that the appropriate legislation could be drawn up at the time to do that instead of stretching this expiry date over time.

Part of the reason for the drainage works is that land has been cleared in this area over time—all the native scrubland, tea-tree etc.—and lucerne was put in. The main variety was Hunter River lucerne, and anyone with a farming background in South Australia will know that it was around the mid-1970s that Hunter River lucerne was wiped out by aphids. Lucerne is a deep-rooted plant so it could drag out all of that useful water to keep it green for a very long time, because it has a big taproot. That was basically doing the job of a drain while the Hunter River lucerne was in place and that had replaced the natural scrubland over the landscape that was there before.

Drainage works can be the ire of some of people and some people think they are a great thing. I know that, from my observations of the South-East, having travelled through there quite a bit in the 1980s and 1990s and up until today and working down there over that time, you can see they do the job and you note that in the dry years they are not that necessary. In 1992 they would have been necessary, because that was quite a wet year for everyone. We need to make sure that we put the right programs in place when it comes to inflicting drains on farmers and the community and make sure that the right procedures are put in place.

I fear that with the extension of this legislation, other drains involved with the REFLOWS project could be tacked into it and no compensation at all be paid to farmers and members of the community. We believe that when it is needed introduce the appropriate legislation at that time, with the appropriate compensation guidelines in it if there is the need for people to give up land. I have said it before: a 200 metre strip of land through this country is quite valuable, and we are not getting any more of it. Obviously you cannot clear country anymore—

**Mr Pengilly:** You can, but you can't get caught.

**Mr PEDERICK:** One thing I will say on that is that we obviously need some better management of native vegetation in this state, with the plethora of fires that are happening, and we need to do that, whether it be privately-owned scrubland or heritage scrub or whether it is publicly-owned land like national parks. We really do need better management of native vegetation in this state.

With those few words I indicate, as the member for MacKillop has indicated, that we will be opposing this legislation. We believe that other legislation could be put in place as far as projects regarding bringing water from the South-East to the Coorong are concerned. Just on that, I know that water could be used as far as savings targets involving the Murray, but we have to make sure that we get all that right so that we are not robbing Peter to pay Paul. As we know too well in this state, the Murray has been fought over for well over 100 years and we are still not quite there.

Mr Whetstone interjecting:

**Mr PEDERICK:** Is it Paul robbing to pay Peter? I am not sure. Thank you, member for Chaffey. We have to make sure we get this right. As the member for MacKillop indicated in his contribution, the South-East conservation and drainage board could take over, manage this and get on with the job, so we believe this legislation is not necessary. When it comes to the time for any other projects, the appropriate legislation can be debated in this house and the other place so that we get the right outcomes not just for the community but for the farmers and the water users of this area.