



## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 03<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST 2017

### MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:36):** I rise to support the amended motion, to make sure that we do have a fresh healthy River Murray. It has always been my stand since coming into this place in 2006. In 2006, we saw the start of the Millennium Drought, and we are well aware of the meeting on Melbourne Cup day with John Howard and ministers talking about plans to keep the river in good condition. But guess what, Madam Deputy Speaker? We have people trying to give us history lessons here today. I am going to talk about a little bit of history.

Guess what the Rann Labor government were going to do? The Rann Labor government were going to build a weir at Wellington with hundreds of thousands of tonnes of rocks that were going to sink into the sediment, as would the pylons that would have gone into a weir that was proposed back in the 1920s and 1930s.

*The Hon. J.W. Weatherill interjecting:*

**Mr PEDERICK:** That is exactly what was going to happen, and the Premier was here, the member for Colton was here and the member for Mawson was here. This motion, and even the amended motion, is about supporting all who rely on the River Murray. But, no, the Labor government were quite keen to sacrifice thousands of people and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of production annually below Wellington. That is exactly what was going to happen, and it did not happen. I really thank the resilience of those people of the River Lakes Coorong Action Group, people like Henry Jones—and God rest his soul, what a champion of the river—for the work that they did.

I was stunned when I had meetings with the former member for Chaffey, who was the water minister at the time, because all the concern was about getting water to Adelaide. Sure, we had to have water to Adelaide, but we had to have water for other offtakes as well. The head of SA Water was there with the water minister of the time when I said, 'Just lower the pumps at Murray Bridge and Mannum. Just lower the pumps,' but they said, 'No, it couldn't happen.' That was the conversation I had, and guess what? Yes, in the end they did. They built the cofferdams. They built the cofferdams and lowered the pumps, but that was only after I was told it could not happen. How ridiculous!

It was an engineering solution that was that simple it was crazy. That is what happened in the end, and I certainly salute those people on the lower reaches of the river and those people around the lakes. I salute the people who own Wellington Lodge and the upper stations, who were put through hell and threatened with compulsory acquisition of their land. Roads were built to the weir, and they went through the Public Works Committee, and there was that threat of the river being blocked at Wellington. It would have destroyed the lifeblood of the lower reaches of the river in South Australia.

So I for one on this side of the house, will not be lectured by this Labor government because the member for Colton, the Premier and the member for Mawson were all there, and all they were going

to do was cut people off. We need those freshwater flows. I was so pleased that, when I pushed for a freshwater recovery in our party room, the party room came my way and we pushed for a 50-gigalitre desal plant that would have been more than enough, seeing that now there has been a 100-gigalitre desal plant built there that is just a white elephant about to have another white elephant put next to it, namely, a diesel generator.

What has gone on is just disgusting, the threats and the things that this Labor government did to those people. Apart from the weir that was going to be built at Wellington, there were bunds built at Clayton, Currency Creek and Narrung, cutting off communities, splitting up the river and destroying those communities, getting into the hearts and minds of those communities. So, yes, we all need to be angry about the allegations of water theft in the northern basin. I have toured through the northern basin and I have toured through the southern basin, and I have seen what goes on up there. There is still plenty of room for improvement, but we just need to be—

*An honourable member interjecting:*

**Mr PEDERICK:** Yes. We all need to be proactive and push for a freshwater relief of the river and make sure that critical water needs, environmental needs and irrigating needs are met, but I will not be lectured to by a government that cut off our river communities and threatened to cut off the bottom of the river.