

Supply Bill – 23 June 2010

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (18:16): I rise to add a further contribution to the Supply Bill and to comment further on the water—or lack of it—for this state. I refer briefly to the recent floods on the Darling River earlier this year. We had one around Christmas time and one a bit later than that. The second flood was record flooding and exemplified how the northern Murray-Darling Basin is so mismanaged. There is mismanagement in the southern Murray-Darling Basin, but there is massive mismanagement in the north.

While we have the Murray-Darling Basin Authority trying to work out sustainable diversion limits in getting environmental flows through to the Murray mouth, how can we get accurate data when we have such a valuable asset that we do not measure? In these northern flood plains, it is flood plain harvested and captured by major irrigation groups with no real accountability for that water. In fact, with the first flood we had the initial amounts of water that were to flow past the Menindee Lakes, because the first two lakes were to fill up, because they are the only ones that have been operating for the last eight years—until recently. There was a great carry-on that the Premier had negotiated extra water to come past. That water was to come past the top two Menindee Lakes—Lakes Wetherell and Pamamaroo—anyway.

So that was a furphy for a start with all the talk about what water we would get down. New South Wales did not want the shared water resource to get up to the limit where it would have to come under tri-state controls through New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, with the 640 gigalitre limit where they would have to open another lake. What happened with the second flood? Instead of managing it better we had a great wasted opportunity where more water could have been sent down earlier. There is a certain limit—I think about 20 gigalitres a day—and if more than that goes down it floods out on the anabranch and out on the flood plain below Menindee and there are some losses.

The sad thing is that we have also had eight years where the bottom two lakes—Lakes Menindee and Cawndilla—could have been re-engineered to make more water savings. Money was made available under the Howard government—\$400 million—to re-engineer the lakes, and we had Penny Wong coming out the other day saying that she had done a report worth multi-millions of dollars. That is really handy! Now we have put hundreds of gigalitres of water into these two lakes and there will be hundreds of gigalitres of dead water, and we have lost a real opportunity to manage our water in this part of the Murray-Darling Basin. We will get a share of that water, but so much will be dead water and dead storage that we cannot get out. The opportunity to redesign the lakes, cut a channel back to the Darling from Lake Cawndilla—the bottom of those four lake systems—and put a weir between Lake Menindee and Lake Cawndilla has been lost for now.

I was very pleased that the Broken Hill city council invited several members, including the deputy leader from the other place, the Hon. Michelle Lensink, the member for Chaffey and me, and we had very good dialogue. A real opportunity was lost there. So, there needs to be a lot more work done right throughout the system. This affects the irrigation sector and the critical needs sector right throughout South Australia, and especially my electorate. We have lost whole irrigation sectors down at Meningie and Narrung; they have run out of water. People are trying to work out the sustainable diversion limits that will come in and whether or not they get rid of water now.

I believe that the federal government is unfairly forcing the price of water down and it is making life very hard for people in the agricultural scene who are stressed out. I have mentioned before in this place the issues with mice and locusts and that this will need further management. The government needs to get further involved in these issues and get on with the job.

As far as water is concerned, another issue that has come up recently is the proposed dry-dock at Mannum which, sadly, the federal government has not funded. It is a project worth nearly \$2.5 million. I call on the state government to get on board and get on with this project so that we can help save and make the tourism industry prosper in South Australia. We have four vessels along that stretch of river that contribute \$125 million to the economy of the Murraylands. We have had no proactive action from the federal government, so the state

government needs to come in and foot the bill so these boats can be dry-docked and surveyed so they can get on with the job.

Mr Venning: Hear, hear!

Mr PEDERICK: I note the voice from the background of the member for Schubert. There are massive issues moving forward. I note that I have limited time, but the mining super profits tax threatens all the mining in South Australia, not just the 20 billion-dollar expansion at Olympic Dam but also the \$20 billion of further mining investment elsewhere.

We have seen the **health** minister do a backflip today when talking about bringing services closer to country members. I have heard the minister say previously in this house when the Labor Party was trying to get the original country health plan through that 90 minutes from a hospital was close enough. We saw the outrage with that proposal from country people, and rightly so.

We have issues with **fisheries and marine parks**. The government is trying in a backhanded way to manage fisheries with marine park legislation which needs far more thought and input before we have a workable solution. We see issues with the federal government and its Building the Education Revolution. It has been out of control with its funding. If the federal government had put the money into private schools, it would have been able to get full value for the dollar. It could have built decent venues with its BER money but, sadly, public schools have been shafted by state education departments basically charging double for gymnasiums or, in some cases, three quarters, when they could have built quite a structure for the very same amount.

In winding up, I just want to make a quick point about **natural resources management**. I am very concerned about the money that is spent on administration. I note the ad that was in this week's *Advertiser* for the rent on the natural resource centre in Murray Bridge. It has a yield of \$312,766 a year in rent. That is not bad for an office, and there is no personal reflection on anyone who works there. There is a lot of work that goes into administration there, and I think it is outrageous that we have to pay that much rent for that many people. I wonder how much money really hits the ground in worthwhile projects. It has become another huge bureaucracy under this government. We do have to manage our natural resources, but I think there are far better ways to do it.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the 20 years that the member for Schubert has been in this place. I have worked with him for over four years. When I came into this place, I was offered the job of deputy whip. I had a great time working with the whip at the time (the member for Schubert) for 2½ years. We had a very good working relationship. He was my mentor, and I was pleased to have the opportunity of taking on the Whip's role in this new parliament and having the member for Schubert help to guide me a lot at times. I really appreciate that.

I spoke about the former member for Stuart, the Hon. Graham Gunn, when he left this place after nearly 40 years, and the member for Schubert has given 20 years service and will have nearly four more years. I congratulate him on his service and wish him well for the future.