

## MURRAY-DARLING BASIN BILL – 15 October 2008

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 23 September 2008. Page 119.)

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (22:06):** I am not the lead speaker on this bill. I rise briefly to speak to this bill. I note that in the title it says:

An act to facilitate the operation of an agreement entered into between the commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory to promote and coordinate effective planning and management for the equitable, efficient and sustainable use of the water and other natural resources of the Murray-Darling Basin; to make related amendments...

I really hope that in the future we can get this right because obviously it has not been right for probably 150 years. I think the biggest issue (in my mind, anyway) is the fact that we manage only half of the basin. We do not manage above Menindee Lakes, and I think that is where the process is really flawed. I think that we should have proper management of inflows. We have seen the almost unrestricted building of diversions and the building of storages in the eastern states (in southern Queensland and in northern New South Wales). The New South Wales government has actually documented illegal diversions in the Macquarie Marshes, and it looked as though it was going to rubber stamp diversions until recently, and then enforce its legislation.

We have not got it right for a long time. Too many deals have been done, caps have not been related to properly, and there has been an almost unrestricted free for all, especially in the northern basin. Then we see other states flex their muscles and, for whatever reason, they seem to—in times of drought and tough times, as we are in at the minute—get higher water allocations. People can argue that it is only for a certain amount of water, but it is still hundreds of gigalitres of high security water being allocated at rates of around 80 per cent and 95 per cent in areas throughout the basin when South Australia at the moment, until today, was struggling along at 11 per cent (now 15 per cent).

I think that, if there was more equity in the whole system, we would not have seen the need for the state government to go ahead with its rushed plan to aid irrigators to keep their permanent plantings alive. If this government had the temerity and had the brazenness of the Bracks and now the Brumby government and had put forward the rights of this state, I think we would have had better outcomes in achieving water to keep not only permanent plantings but also to keep our horticulture and our dairies and, at the bottom end of the river, the lakes, in a situation so that they would not be in the drastic state that they are in now. This legislation and the legislation that we have just passed is certainly historic legislation.

I hope that the new Murray-Darling Basin Authority, when it comes into play, does manage the basin well because things just have not happened for us until now. We certainly support the bill, as it is essentially the framework for the operation of the referral of powers (which we have just debated). I note that several other bills, including the groundwater control act and the Natural Resources Management Act—and others—will be amended. I commend the bill to the house. We support the bill, but let us get it right, not only for South Australia but also for the country.