

SAFE DRINKING WATER BILL – 22 March 2011

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 9 March 2011.)

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (17:36): I rise to make a contribution to the Safe Drinking Water Bill 2011, and will try to be concise. I will say that members on this side of the house have made some excellent contributions in regard to this bill and I note it is about making our water supply safe for everyone, which is highly important; but we also have to have surety of supply. I note that, during the recent drought, supplies to 95 per cent of this state were threatened because of the lack of water coming down the River Murray.

I believe the government's ill-fated plan to build a temporary weir at Wellington was the wrong move, and I think the right move is to negotiate more water for the river in the longer term so that we do not have to go down that path, so that we can flush the two million tonnes per annum of salt and other nutrients out the river so that we can have a healthy river system.

It is interesting to note that SA Water was even thinking, during the height of the drought, about putting a small desalination plant onto the Keith pipeline, which my property feeds off at Coomandook. I said to SA Water at the time, 'What are you going to do with the salt?', and they looked at me and I thought, 'Well, yes, that's an interesting concept.' That never went ahead, salinity got to a pretty high level, the water was almost not able to be used, but we survived.

We survived much better on the Keith pipeline, as people were used to drawing water from the river through a paid system, than did a lot of people down towards Milang and Point Sturt and also down towards the Narrung peninsula and around Meningie, who had been able to draw water for stock and domestic use out of Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina. After a lot of bureaucracy, emergency pipelines had to go in. Thankfully the pipelines went in a lot more quickly than the bureaucracy took. I must commend the contractors involved who, when they got down there with several crews working flat out, got water into those areas when it needed to happen.

We still have the problem today where people round Lake Albert cannot use that lake's water for irrigation because of the Narrung bund, which is still in place because of this government's reticence to remove it. That bund, along with the other two at Clayton and Currency Creek should have gone out before yesterday, so that we can get this river flowing, get fresh water into the system and have people enjoying the access to water as they did in the past and as they should do in the future.

I have talked about the emergency pipelines. Water is very significant in this state, and other members have talked about their use—especially those members like me on the land. I have around 270,000 litres of storage of rainwater on my property, though that is backed up with a supply of river water.

It is noted how people look at rainwater differently. When you have got it and you drink it and bathe in it you know how good it is. Sure, it falls on the roof and there is dirt. There can be all sorts of things, but it is still a very clean source of water.

When I look at where we have gone with respect to water supplies for this state, and we note that the River Murray is piped over 800 kilometres to Ceduna, it just shows the shortsightedness of the state government when, in years gone past, the former member for Flinders, Liz Penfold, had investors wanting to put in small desalination plants over on the Eyre Peninsula, but they were denied third party access to the distribution network.

I would like to think that that gets partly addressed by this bill so that people with vision can access SA Water pipelines so long as their water is up to scratch to safe drinking water standards. It would be far more sensible to desalinate water over on the far West Coast than to pump river water that far, because they certainly have water issues over there. However, the member for Flinders will be able to reflect on that better than I can.

It is also of note that, when the new pipelines went through, constituents in my electorate at Wellington East had been used to sourcing water from a council provided system, the Coorong council. When the pipeline went through about half the people who came to us said, 'We want access to the pipe,' and the other half said they did not because, obviously, there is a cost in hooking up to it. It is something like \$3,500 to hook up to the River Murray piped water, and some did not want to do that.

What I will say is that at least the people putting in the pipe put in a T-valve there so that, if the pipe does go down those few kilometres to Wellington East, water could be supplied there. Also, most of those residents there have been very handy in putting in quite a bit of rainwater storage for their use.

A lot of the other issues have been covered ably by other members in this place. As I said, my main concern is that we actually have supplies of water, because I think that, as much as some people, especially some irrigators, always point to the stock and domestic supplies taken by Adelaide in this state, I still firmly believe that if we did not have one million people on the end of the river during this recent drought the eastern states would have just cut us off and we would not have got anything, especially below Lock 1.

That may be cynical, but you see how water has been talked about lately and almost fought over for the last 100 years in this state, and I firmly believe that, yes, we do need to ease Adelaide's reliance on the river but I do not think we ever want to wean Adelaide off the river.

I note that also we are backing up our water supplies with a \$2 billion 100 gegalitre desalination plant when, if action had been taken earlier, perhaps we could have built a smaller desalination plant equivalent to the first one built in Perth of about 50 gegalitres that was built for \$300 million—far better value for money.

Just before I close, I know that there has been some discussion on using black water or grey water for drinking purposes. Certainly, we witnessed this over at Perth where some industries were linked up to, I think, about a six gegalitre per annum system of black water being cleaned up for industrial use. They loved that water for industrial use, because they took out all the nutrients and they could get quite good use out of it. Mind you, I think that, as we have seen in other states, we are a long way off going anywhere near drinking black water. I note that in Europe, and I was there recently, it is recycled many times through sets of kidneys—they just have to because there is a finite source of water and we have to make the best use of it. I note that we do support the bill, but I also note that the shadow minister will be asking some pertinent questions during the committee stage.