

Murray Darling River System – February 8, 2007

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond): I wish to briefly address this issue today because obviously the River Murray is dear to my heart being the member for Hammond.

I will give a brief outline of what I believe to be the allocations throughout the Murray-Darling Basin. These are the annual allocations: 790 gigalitres for Queensland; 7 300 gigalitres for New South Wales; 3 400 gigalitres for Victoria; and South Australia has an allocation of 1 850 gigalitres but it normally receives 4 800 gigalitres of water in median inflows across the border in a median inflow year. This year we are only receiving 1 470 gigalitres.

On *The 7.30 Report* the other night the Premier was saying that he wants to guarantee environmental flows for South Australia. I am sorry, it does not happen now. As soon as special accounting—and I will not let Victoria and New South Wales take all the heat because they take a belting under special accounting as well: it used to be called drought accounting—comes into play, everyone takes a hit because the water just physically is not there because it is over-allocated. That is the crux of the problem.

I will come straight to that point. The reason the Premier and his Minister for Water Security are so worried about other politicians taking over the water is because Labor has stuffed it up. Labor governments in four states cannot get their heads together and sort out the solution to the water problem with respect to the Murray-Darling Basin.

That is why the Premier and his water security minister are so worried about the management of the basin, because they know damn well that they cannot even have a love-in and get together with their mates from the Eastern States and organise the water. That is why there should be a national approach, and federal politicians need to sign off on it.

I agree that we need a beefed up Murray-Darling Basin Commission that will advise minister Turnbull, and whoever is the minister in the future. We will have a Labor government federally (I hope it is not for a long time, but it will happen, just as we will have a Liberal government here at some stage, hopefully in three years' time).

That is what I believe. I heard the Premier say on the *7.30 Report* that he will go to Canberra and fight for South Australia so that we have minimum environmental flows. That is a fallacy, because we do not have it now. We do need minimum environmental flows, and I believe that Howard's plan, when it is fully outlined, will show how we will achieve that.

We have already seen the broad outline, where \$3 billion is to be allocated for buying back water allocations. Just before Howard's plan was released we were taking guesses in our office on how much money would be announced. I thought that if we received \$3 billion or \$4 billion it would be fantastic; but \$10 billion! What an incredible thing for the Prime Minister of this country to do: to get hold of the Murray-Darling Basin and fix it once and for all. State governments over a century have just stuffed it up.

I have mentioned that the river is over-allocated. Irrigators in my area (and I apologise; some of them are down on the Narrung Peninsula in the member for MacKillop's area) have even suggested that perhaps allocations could be bought back or irrigators could give up 10 per cent of their allocations. That would put about 1 400 or 1 500 gigalitres of water back into the Murray. So, that is an option.

Another matter that we need to address is that no major water supply infrastructure has been announced by Labor for the direct supply of Adelaide's water in the last five years. So, I find it ludicrous for members opposite to carry on about water supply.

With respect to the proposed weir, in 2003, DWLBC quoted \$160 million to pipe water to the areas around the lake that would be cut off by any weir that would block the river. I believe that that figure has now jumped to \$330 million. The minister told us in this house during question time that everyone must receive water. My information is that people in the Narrung and Meningie area have already been alerted that not everyone will receive water if they are cut off.

Last year, when the Hon. David Ridgway introduced in the upper house in the last session his bills with respect to sewerage mining, rainwater fitted to houses with non-return valves and grey water reuse, guess who voted against them—members of the Labor Party. That is how in tune they are to drought in Australia.