

MURRAY RIVER, LOWER LAKES - 15 November 2007

Mr PENGILLY (Finniss) (12:29): I move:

That this house condemns the state government for its environmental treatment River Murray and the subsequent effect on communities living around those lakes.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:51): I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Finniss and to speak about the lack of environmental thought where the Lower Murray and lakes are concerned. That is no better illustrated than when Premier Rann made the announcement on 6 November last year saying, 'We'll just build a weir at Wellington for \$20 million.' That is only about 2 per cent of the eventual cost of such a structure, and the fact that there is no solid base to build it on means that it would have to be constantly maintained.

In regard to the weir, when I asked a question of Professor Peter Cullen this morning, it was interesting that he indicated that, if it ever did get built, it may only hold back unusable water— and that is my position.

It is all right to sacrifice tens of thousands of people below Wellington, but for what reason? If there is no reason and you would have to end up building a desalination plant at Murray Bridge off-takes to feed Adelaide with water, it would be absolutely crazy to put a structure down there.

Apart from the fact that the EIS has only just been commenced in the past couple of weeks, which is outrageous in itself, I hope the government is doing the engineering studies to see what will happen as water levels continue to fall lower and the water quality suffers and looking at the effects not just below the proposed weir but above it. It would be the biggest white elephant that this government ever built, if it went ahead, and it would just render—

An honourable member interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: If the minister wants to speak to the motion, that's fine.

The Hon. R.J. McEwen: That's right. Bang the old drum.

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, I will bang the drum, because I am responsible for my constituents and I will bang the drum as hard as I can.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your protection. I will move on to another subject: the leaking barrages. Yes, they are operated through the Murray-Darling Basin Commission but it is SA Water that operates them. What do we have down there? People banging in stocks—bits of PVC, bits of poly pipe and triangular shaped wedges trying to hold the log shut. This is almost Stone Age stuff. The government should be lobbying the federal government if it does not have the funds to completely refurbish the barrages; it should lobby the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and get on with the job.

There are people around the lakes who are talking about spending half a million dollars to put in private desalination plants, because their livelihoods are just dissolving in front of them. I am well aware of the fact that there is a drought, but it seems that everyone on the Labor side, including the Water Security Minister, who masquerades as a National Party member when it suits, does not seem to realise that the drought has been right throughout this

basin for five years. For five years there has been a drought in the Murray-Darling Basin, and that is where the catchment is.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald: Who is responsible for the drought?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member is out of her place.

Mr PEDERICK: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your protection. I am pleased that you can act. The leaking barrage is causing major distress in the Lower Lakes. We have salinity ingress (not only from there), salinity from ground water, and salinity from upstream causing major issues in the Lower Lakes.

There is a psychological effect from the proposed weir. I wonder if the so-called water security minister has talked to local GPs in the area, who have had to put up with people who are close to suicidal because of the proposal to build a weir at Wellington.

There are major issues with the vineyard industry at Langhorne Creek, which is looking for water, and other industries down there. A program that was going to be instigated, which had controlled flows through the barrages, never eventuated. It was held up through bureaucratic bungling. At the time when it was first discussed there were enough flows on certain days to flush the barrages.

I will close now, because I have noticed the time. I just want to make people aware of what is happening in the Lower Lakes and in the Lower Murray as far as the dairy industry is concerned.

Dairy herds are being sold off. Dairying in the Lower Murray and Lower Lakes will probably never recover, apart from the fact that the government has spent only half of the money allocated for the Lower Murray rehabilitation plan. People are parking herds interstate and selling them.

The Hon. K.A. Maywald interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: No; it is not dishonest, minister; you might want to check your numbers. I will close in saying that one constituent indicated that they would rather shoot the stock, because they are so proud of it, than march it off to the meatworks. It is terrible that this is happening. It is all right to say that, yes, they have been allocated 22 per cent and they have 6 per cent more water, but the access issues in the Lower Lakes are just frightening.

I commend the motion.