

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

WATER SECURITY - 14 Feb 2008

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:13): I wish to make some comments on water security in the Lower Lakes and on ministerial statements about water security made earlier this week. Premier Rann's visit to Narrung last week typifies the government's inaction on the severe problems faced by thousands of people in the Lower Lakes and Coorong region. Anything the government does now is a rearguard action. There has been no proactive forward thinking or planning for the area. Many people have already sold up their dairy herd or land and families have left—uprooted after generations of endeavour.

The Premier turned up last Friday unannounced and unexpected, long after the horse has bolted. Some locals were offended by this belated visit. They also wondered at the secrecy which left them in some ways unprepared for such an opportunity to speak with the one person they hold ultimately responsible for their fate. What was the purpose of this sudden and apparently hasty visit by the Premier and other members of his cabinet? Was it actually to do something or to be seen to be doing something? As it happens, I was present again that day on one of my many visits to the area. I was on another trip with about 70 people who would love to have heard from the Premier.

Those visits back up countless conversations I have with landholders and others in the region, who have received little or no acknowledgment by government of their plight, let alone assistance. How many times have I raised their plight in this house, often to the empty seats opposite?

Mr Rann and his colleagues would have seen first-hand how resilient, creative and courageous these forgotten South Australians are. He might have even felt a sense of pride in the determination of fellow South Australians to prevail in the face of adversity. Those people will tell you that Mr Rann can take no credit for their survival to date. They will undoubtedly be grateful for any future assistance, but left to wonder why it has been so long coming—if it ever comes.

On that trip the other day I first called in at Clem Mason's property, *Masondrina*, and he showed how many hundreds of metres he had had to extend his pipeline out into the lake. He also has a camp ground there, which is frequented by many people from the city and elsewhere. Then we went to Richard and Alison Hancock's property, where they have had to extend off-takes, way, way, way out into the lake whereby their normal pump cannot take up water.

At Yalkuri they are spending tens of thousands of dollars installing 225,000-litre tanks so they can pump the water 13 kilometres, and then it goes through another 55 kilometres of pipeline, to service the thousands of cattle they have on their property. They have to have the tanks because the pumps will not keep up the water flow otherwise to the many cattle that they need to water. Then we get to the property at Tauwitchere, David Harvey's property, where there is a bit of forward thinking. He will not just survive the drought but he is thinking forward to the years ahead, and has spent over \$200,000 installing a desalination plant.

Then we get to the shores of Lake Albert, which have receded up to 2 kilometres from where they normally are, where people go out on ropes so that they will not sink into the mud, so they can access water just for stock and domestic, because the dairy herds have long gone. And where was Rann? He was not out with me on the 4-wheel motorbike having a face to face inspection of what was going on out there.

There are two pipeline projects that need to crank up on the Lower Lakes, and I will acknowledge the government's work on the feasibility study in assisting with the funding of the Langhorne Creek project to get water to the vineyards and others down there, and the domestic pipe in from Strathalbyn. But out of the two and half billion dollars of projects named this week there is no mention of water security in the Lower Lakes. These plans need to be fast-tracked because these people are running out of water just to exist.

Kevin Rudd's national water policy, which came out before the November election, says that he wants equity and access to all. Well, let's see that enacted. I would also like to

make a comment about Penny Wong, the new federal water minister, who happens to come from Adelaide, I believe. I wrote a letter to the minister several weeks ago, inviting her to the Lower Lakes and to show her around, and her message to my office on Friday morning from one of her staff was: no; I will not be there until the end of the year, if I get there at all. What sort of action is that from the federal Labor government?

Ms Breuer interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes, well get her to do her job.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member's time has expired.