

## **Lower Murray and Lakes – July 3, 2008**

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:40):** I rise today to comment on the desperate situation in the Lower Murray and Lower Lakes. It is a disaster. It has just not been declared a disaster, as it should be. I note that as a result of an announcement there could be \$600 million of federal money invested into the region for pipelines, but there is cautious optimism from people in the area. It is one thing to build pipelines, but it is another thing to build them on time to save communities from dwindling further and going toward destruction and to have water available for the pipelines.

It is interesting to note that the federal government has had to act on the Lower Murray and Lower Lakes and in the Riverland. I believe that some \$150 million of the package is going to the Riverland. It is obvious that the Minister for Water Security and the Premier have not secured water supplies for South Australia. Things could be done in desperate times. Some people are talking about a plan to find 250 gigalitres. It could be found in the Menindee Lakes and other water sources and purchased for emergency relief for Lake Alexandrina.

The bund was put in quickly on the Narrows between Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina. They had a few problems because it was built from each side of the Narrows. It kept pushing the mud into the middle so instead of using 12,000 cubic metres of material, 38,000 cubic metres was used. At least one cement truck was tipped over and there were a few other problems. However, it does seem to be lifting levels in Lake Albert and helping to combat the acid sulphate soils. I hope that the acid sulphate situation is not used as an excuse to do other things.

The original trigger for Lake Alexandrina which is being mined to alleviate the pain on Lake Albert is minus 1.5. I am hearing anecdotal stories that it is heading back to minus one, which is half a metre above the level of the weir that was announced in November 2006, with no thought of environmental planning or proper costing by the Rann Labor government. It has taken 20 months for the communities of the Lower Lakes to get any action at all—20 months of people going out of business. It is 20 months of just not agriculture, irrigation and dairy families going down the drain but also recreation going backwards.

There is a perception, especially with houseboat companies, that there is no water in the river. Certainly, there is water in the river for houseboats. I acknowledge that the Department for Environment and Heritage is working with houseboat companies to find moorings on crown land; I acknowledge that. It is a great recreational holiday and people should take the opportunity to do it whenever they can.

I want to talk about the ferries that are not getting attention. Only one ferry is operating at Mannum. Recently, at a meeting at Mannum members of the community were asking representatives from the department, 'When will the second one run out of water?' It was obvious that the departmental representatives were not allowed to say anything. I can put my figure on it—there is somewhere between 600 millimetres and one metre of water to go and then they will not have a ferry because nothing is getting done. They need to have \$3 million or \$4 million set aside for the planning and extension of ferry ramps.

The government uses the excuse that we need environmental clearances and cultural clearances. Hang on, the irrigators have gone through these clearance processes. The recreational people, that is, the houseboat owners, have done it as well, so why can't the government? As far as these infrastructure programs coming into place, I hope it does happen for the Narrung Peninsula and Pottaloch Peninsula. I hope it does happen for the Langhorne Creek and Currency Creek. The one thing we have to secure is water not only for those pipes but for the lakes. As I said before, it is one thing to have infrastructure, but it is another thing to have water.

If seawater is ever let into Lake Albert or Lake Alexandrina in any amount, they will become stinking ponds and they will be no good for anyone; and this country will have to face the embarrassment of breaking its Ramsar agreement, an international agreement for significant wetlands.

Time expired.