

**House of Assembly  
18 November 2009**

**PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE: ADELAIDE DESALINATION PROJECT**

Ms CICCARELLO (Norwood) (11:17): I move:

That the 336<sup>th</sup> report of the committee, entitled Adelaide Desalination Project 100 Gigalitre Expansion Works, be noted.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:35): I rise to make a few comments about the final decision to build a 100 gigalitre desalination plant for Adelaide. I note the work that we, on this side of the house, in the Liberal Party did back in 2006 where we took the time to look into this. Most of us went over and had a look at the Perth plant. That is about a 50 gigalitre plant. We instigated that in our policy in late 2006.

It is interesting to note that that initial plant in Perth cost only \$300 million to build and then it took \$87 million for the piping infrastructure. We have noted that over time, because this government has not had water as a priority and has only started building the desalination plant this year in 2009, with so many cities around Australia building desalination plants prices have risen incredibly. I think the numbers are that, for a 50 gigalitre desalination plant, it would have been \$1.4 billion and for this plant now being built at Port Stanvac it is \$1.8 billion, and we still will not have it connected to anywhere near most of the metropolitan area.

What troubles me with this is that the government was not taking water seriously in 2006. We have had dry years since 2002 (including 2002) and we have had a government that is so concerned about its coffers and the money it can extract from SA Water that in no way known would it promote people with private options for getting water supply into communities.

We have had the issue recently where River Murray water will be piped to Ceduna. I think that is totally ridiculous. They have had struggles with their local suppliers over there, but a bit of forward thinking would not go astray. In fact, third parties and consortia went to the government wanting to build private desalination plants on the far West Coast but they were not allowed access—

Mr Pisoni interjecting:

Mr PEDERICK: Yes. They were not allowed access to the SA Water pipes. These SA Water pipes seem sacrosanct, and people cannot come up with potable water supply options to run in these systems. We have a structure of pipelines in this state that are probably worth \$7 billion or \$8 billion, so why would you duplicate it? You can put in duplicated systems when you are building new developments, but it would be far too expensive for a state with a budget at the moment of around \$14 billion or \$15 billion to reproduce another pipe system.

Options for desalination have been put up, and we certainly introduced three bills into the other place regarding the use of rainwater, recycled water and better use of blackwater, but the Labor Party voted them down, while all the time panicking about a potable supply to Adelaide because of its lack of action. The government said it would build a \$20 million weir at Wellington but, thankfully, that has been pushed out into the wilderness—only because, I believe, of polling done by the Labor Party, which showed that it was a totally untenable idea and that it should be doing far more to negotiate a better deal for this state to gain an appropriate water supply.

It is often heard in the Eastern States that, if our end of the river, including Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina, was in close proximity to Sydney, it would be in pristine condition. Not enough has been done, but now we see a massive capital expenditure, whereby we are tied, potentially, to 50 per cent of the needs of the city and country towns River Murray licence going into an energy hungry desalination plant and, to an extent, that is fine, and we even proposed to build a 50 gigalitre plant.

They should have used more imagination—and it does not take a lot—because collecting stormwater and cleaning it to a potable standard has been done around the world. You only have to go to Orange in New South Wales or to Singapore, where they drink stormwater. However, we just kept being told that it was too risky and too dangerous. But, hang on, if we have the technology to clean up sea water, we have the technology to clean up stormwater.

It is all about the government keeping control of everything down to minute detail so that it can extract the maximum profit. In fact, since it has been in government, I think that \$2.8 billion has been extracted from general revenue from SA Water, yet we have no water security in this state. We have irrigators who have to fight for their share of water, we have an environment which is dying before our very eyes and a government which, because of polling, suddenly makes grand statements that it recognises that there is a problem in the Lower Lakes. It is amazing what polling can do to a government.

We also have plenty of people down at Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island who are only just getting pipelines with potable water, but there are still people indicating that they will not have the opportunity to hook up to those pipelines. So, it is a major issue, and it just reflects the city-centric attitude of this government, that is, 'We'll fix the city, and it'll be right.'

I return to my comments on desalination on the West Coast and an area on Eyre Peninsula that has so much potential and so much mining potential; you only have to see how well they have done in the farming sector with the good rains this year, and I wish them all the best. There is so much opportunity, yet all this government does is give them a drip feed from the Murray and pipe it 700 or 800 kilometres, and I find that totally ridiculous.

Because this government has dillydallied over getting up any desalination plant, we still have water restrictions, although they have been relaxed because of pressure from this side of the house. As I said before, we also have irrigators who are struggling and an environment that I would say has just about gone past the brink of what it needs to survive into the future.

As to the energy needs of the Adelaide plant, I estimate that, if it is contracted to windmills, it will need about 100 wind turbines contracted through the grid. Really, it is a bit of an accountancy thing: you plug in the desal plant to the black grid and sign a document that states you are getting green power, and that can have all sorts of flaws and depends on which way you look at it.

I think what needs to be explored are options such as the CETO technology. I think they are moving ahead as private operators to build their plants and utilise wave technology, with buoys mounted to pumps on the seafloor under the surface of the water. They operate on wave action and can not only pump water for a desalination plant but also pump enough water to generate electricity and certainly generate spare electricity to go back into the grid. A couple of years ago in Sydney, I witnessed a presentation on that technology, so it is out there and it can be done.

As the member for Unley indicated, about 18 months ago we on this side of the house put up our policy on stormwater for 89 gigalitres to offset the needs of Adelaide and this state. It is a far better proposal to have a broad mix, recycling some greywater, capturing some stormwater and having desalination in the mix. We must ease our reliance on the Murray, and we must think bigger than anything this government has been doing, especially in relation to regional water infrastructure.

This government sells the regions down the drain on water supply and thinks it can get away with building a desalination plant which, when we do have water in the River Murray, it will completely switch off and still charge us double for our water. I firmly believe that is what it will do, when any spare water in our Murray licence could have gone to irrigators or shared between them and the environment.

Motion carried.

The ACTING SPEAKER (Mr Pengilly): The member for Giles.