

WESTERN MOUNT LOFTY WATER RESOURCES - February 28, 2008

Mr GOLDSWORTHY (Kavel) (11:09): I move: *That this house calls on the Rann government to ensure that the water allocation plan in relation to the prescription of the Western Mount Lofty water resources does not restrict primary producers and industry in maintaining and improving the viability of their businesses.*

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (11:28): I rise to speak to this motion, because in the Mallee I have seen what can happen when you obviously get prescription wrong, and I speak about the Roby, Peake and Sherlock Wells area, which was an unprescribed resource. There was some irrigation opened up in the area. There are about four irrigators operating in the area at the moment. Previous to that the local area had extremely good levels of groundwater for extraction.

I am referring to what has happened under the prescription process—and I applaud the process, as I think prescription is the right way to go, but I think it should have happened a long time ago. But the issue with prescription is you have to get it right. It is obvious with what has gone on that it has not gone right.

For a start, there has been a court case, where the government was beaten in court by an operator, and it has come out with a whole heap of other arrangements. So I have seen what has happened locally in Hammond when they get it wrong, and with two ministers this is where it does turn into a dog's breakfast, because, in relation to the groundwater in the Murray-Darling Basin, different parts of the allocation process come under each minister, the Minister for the River Murray and the Minister for the Environment. As I have seen in this place many times before, they just handball it if they cannot or will not answer the question in question time or estimates by saying, 'It's not my responsibility; it's the other minister's.'

Prescription—yes, you have to take into account former and present use and have an idea of where it is going in the future. However, it needs to be much better managed so that we have the right outcomes for everyone—whether stock or domestic users or irrigators—and I call on the government to get it absolutely right in the western Mount Lofty catchment; otherwise it will end up in court again, costing the government hundreds of thousands of dollars, destroying the catchment and also the resource, and causing major unrest in the community. I commend the motion.

Debate adjourned on motion of Mrs Geraghty.