

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE – 24 July, 2008

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

The comments made by the Member for Hammond on 24 July, 2008, (see below), were offered in response to remarks made by the Minister for the River Murray and Water Security the previous day.

23 July, 2008

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: Now, I know that the member for Hammond does not want to know this. I know that the member for Hammond does not want to know the truth. I know that the member for Hammond does not even want to have briefings on this. ...

Mr PEDERICK: I rise on a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The comment that I will not have briefings on this is completely untrue. ...

...

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: I reiterate that I have made the offer to the member for Hammond to have a briefing whenever he chooses. I do not believe he has actually made a phone call to my office in the last six months for a briefing.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: If he has, I am unaware of it, but I am certain that he has not—

Mr Pederick: It might not have been in the last six months.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: 'Might not have been in the last six months'—did you hear that? 'It might not have been in the last six months'—okay, all right, well maybe it's five months, but it has not been in recent times. I have not had a question or an invitation from the member for Hammond to brief him on this in several months, and I think it goes back beyond six months since I last briefed him. I am not certain. We can check on that. I can assure you, however, that I would be, as a local member, seeking a briefing every single month. I would want to be up-to-date. I would want to know what is going on. I would be wanting to get my point across on a regular basis to the minister. I would be wanting to ensure that I had accurate information to take back to my community. That has not occurred.

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (16:24): I wish to comment on some remarks made yesterday in this place by the minister for SA Water regarding ministerial briefings and the River Murray. Since November 2006, the occasion of the infamous weir announcement, I have made over 20 tours and site visits from Renmark to the Murray Mouth. I have attended 55 meetings, including public meetings, forums, workshops and community discussion groups, most of which have been attended by departmental representatives, who present briefings as a matter of course. Regarding the few meetings I am unable to attend, I have minutes and briefings forwarded to me.

I have spoken on the subject of the River Murray in this place 45 times and that includes speeches, questions and budget responses. Apart from these, I receive briefings from the department on a regular basis. Unless the information in these briefings is different from what the minister herself might say (I guess with a bit of political spin), I believe I have been kept very well informed, by not just departmental officials but also the people who live in these places and work with the system.

By invitation, I will be at an all day forum tomorrow conducted by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission looking at how to manage the Lower Lakes in their present stressful condition. As members of the house would also know, I have just spent a week driving some 3,000 kilometres around the north-western part of New South Wales and flying at low level over a large part of the Murray-Darling Basin looking at waterways, storages, diversion channels and the like, trying to assess other options for South Australia's water supply.

More importantly, I have spoken to the people on the ground who run the facilities, who work on the land and know where things are, what things are and how things used to be.

I wonder if the minister can claim to have such first-hand knowledge that has not been distorted and distilled by numerous intermediaries before she sees it? I could not begin to guess the number of phone conversations and emails on the subject that I have received from concerned people, many of whom are well outside my electorate and some of whom are constituents of Chaffey, keen to ensure that their information is fed through to me.

I have been waiting for over 12 months for a ministerial briefing regarding the Mount Bold reservoir, but I guess I will not receive it now because it seems to have fallen off the front page of Labor Party policy. I was going to be given a briefing on why Mount Bold would not be a drain on the River Murray, but obviously someone suddenly realised that the science does not match the fact that they would drain the River Murray continually to keep it full with an expansion of Mount Bold.

The attempt by the member for Chaffey to portray my concentration on this subject as simply a ploy to unseat her is delusional and insulting. She deludes herself that she is that important and it is insulting in that, while it is true that I look forward to the day when her electorate passes that judgment on her, I can assure her that my actions are in pursuit of a far more important goal, that being to save the River Murray from a century of mismanagement, characterised and perpetuated by the glaring procrastination and incompetence of this government and its federal colleagues.