

QUESTION TIME - 4 June 2009

POINT STURT AND HINDMARSH ISLAND WATER SUPPLY

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (14:07): My question is to the Minister for Water Security. Why will the government not make a decision on the piping of water for critical human needs to Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island? The cost of these projects is \$3.4 million and \$3.9 million respectively. The water is required for the critical human needs of residents and landowners of these places. Residents have been told that the decision hangs on available funds from the federal government and whether there is enough left over from other projects.

I point out that the government has given a go-ahead, and work is well underway, for a major non-potable project nearby, despite the fact that its funding has not yet been finalised. It should also be noted that other lakes communities have had water piped for critical human needs at far greater expense, and residents at Point Sturt have not been offered any assistance to cart water, as they will have to do through another summer.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (14:08): I am very happy to answer this question. The Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island communities have been seeking to be included in the network of pipes that have been constructed around the Lower Lakes. Currently we have the federal government's support and approval to go ahead with the irrigation pipeline, which is a project managed by SA Water for the Creeks Pipeline Company, and the commonwealth has said that if any funds remain from that project, unused contingencies, it is happy for those funds to be transferred over to the Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island community pipeline projects, should a business case stack up. It is not prepared to consider a business case until it is known what funds will be available from that project.

Mr Pederick: So they'll just go thirsty unless that happens.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: In relation to the issue of drought funding and water carting, there are many people around the state who are required to cart in water during drought circumstances. They are not alone in that instance.

Mr Pederick interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hammond has asked his question.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: People who used to have water in their dams and their bores also used to have water from those sources. When there is a drought sometimes those resources dry up, and different people are required to cart in water. There is no difference in this instance, apart from the fact that a number of pipelines are being built in the vicinity of that area and we have sought commonwealth support to transfer funds to assist these communities with subsidies to build these pipelines.

Ms Chapman interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The deputy leader will come to order!

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD: The commonwealth has given us an undertaking that it will consider providing any residual funding towards those projects on the basis of a business case. We are monitoring the project carefully. We are determining whether the contingencies will be needed and, as soon as we have concluded the process of assessing the project and it is at a stage where we know whether we will need to use the contingencies or not, we will be able to further progress the process. Of course, any of these communities are quite able, as is anyone else, to access SA Water's pipeline network through the normal connection fees. However, in this instance, they are seeking subsidies so we will have to go through the process that the commonwealth has set out for us.