

**House of Assembly
17 November 2009**

MURRAY RIVER

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:13): My question is to the Premier. Why did the Premier not consider that the health of the River Murray was important enough to place on the agenda for the meeting of state premiers in Adelaide on 5 November 2009?

The Hon. M.D. RANN (Ramsay—Premier, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Social Inclusion, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Sustainability and Climate Change) (15:13): I am very pleased that this question has been asked, because it is this government, not our predecessors, which has put the River Murray on the national agenda. It was this government that tried to get John Howard to allow the River Murray to be debated—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hammond will take his seat. Members have to learn that when the Speaker is on his feet they take their seats. The member for Hammond.

Mr PEDERICK: The question was very specific about why it was not on the agenda; the most important item happening in this state and this country.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The question was why the Premier did not think the issue important enough, not why he did not have the item placed on the agenda.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Thank you, sir. Here we have it. This is the Liberal's River Murray policy. It says here, from the last election campaign, Rob Kerin—remember him? It says here, 'Supports state—'

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The member for MacKillop.

Mr WILLIAMS: I am sure that this has absolutely no relevance to the question. The question was why the matter was not on the agenda.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! Member for MacKillop.

Mr WILLIAMS: Mr Speaker, I raise the point of order of relevance as to where the Premier is going. The question was quite specific. It was about why the River Murray was not on the agenda of a meeting held on 5 November—

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILLIAMS: —with the other premiers, in South Australia.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question, as I pointed out, was why the Premier did not think the matter important enough, not why he did not have the matter put on the agenda. I will give the Premier some indulgence in answering it given the line of the question. The Premier.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Because it has been this government that has been putting the issue of the River Murray on agenda after agenda. All you want to do is talk. We will take action, and that is the difference. Here is their policy—

Members interjecting:

The Hon. M.D. RANN: They do not want to hear their own policy.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: This is the Liberal Party's policy in relation to the River Murray: 'To support retention of state control of the River Murray'. That means that the Victorians get to retain the cap. We have got a—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is a point of order. The Premier will take his seat. The member for MacKillop will take his seat. There is a point of order by the member for MacKillop.

Mr WILLIAMS: Again, I point out that the Liberal Party's policy from four years ago has nothing to do—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WILLIAMS: I remember you saying, 'I want to drop water prices.'

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacKillop will take his seat. No doubt it will become apparent to us all what the Liberal Party policy has to do with why the Premier did or did not think a matter important enough. The Premier.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Okay. I was meeting with John Howard, addressing the Press Club, flying off around the country talking to Peter Beattie, Morris Iemma and others so that the River Murray was absolutely the prime element of debate, and their policy is to support state power control, which means—

Mr Williams interjecting:

The SPEAKER: The member for MacKillop!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —allow New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland to do what they like. The Liberal Party's policy was about allowing the upstream states to continue their rip-off. But you know what? There is something else—breaking news. In the middle of the debate about control of the River Murray, when we were fighting to get a national takeover for the River Murray to be run by independent scientists, the Liberals said that they would 'convene a high level group to evaluate the alternative water source options so that by 2009 a plan was in place to remove Adelaide's reliance on the River Murray'. While we were fighting to get a national commission, they wanted to run up the white flag on Victoria. So, have your—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: All you wanted to do was talk about it; that is why we have taken action.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! I think the Premier has concluded his answer.

The Hon. M.D. RANN: Thank you, sir. That is the key point. The key point is—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

The Hon. M.D. RANN: —that the Liberals wanted to run up the white flag and allow Victoria to do what it likes.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Unley.