

RIVER MURRAY, LOWER LAKES

25 March 2009

Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (15:28): My question is to the Premier. Does the government intend to acquire additional water to compensate the Lower Lakes for the 30 gigitalres to be pumped from Lake Alexandrina to the proposed Goolwa-Clayton pool? The already severely stressed Lower Lakes will have their critical survival time shortened further by the additional extraction of water for this proposal, accelerating the perceived need to build a weir at Wellington that the government states it does not want to build.

The Hon. K.A. MAYWALD (Chaffey—Minister for the River Murray, Minister for Water Security) (15:30): At the moment we have before the Murray-Darling Authority—and also soon to have a referral to the federal government—a proposal to build a number of structures around the Goolwa Channel, and the Finniss and Currency creeks. The issue is around acidification; it is around water quality; it is around trying to protect some very important areas of the Lower Lakes, of which those areas are part of the Lower Lakes. We have limited water coming into South Australia. We are doing our best to try to manage with the water that we have, whilst, at the same time, we are looking to purchase water from the temporary market to ensure that we get through to June before we have to make a decision on the construction of a weir at Wellington.

The project proposal for the Goolwa Channel does include the pumping of some water from Lake Alexandrina across to the Goolwa Channel, specifically because the Goolwa Channel is likely to disconnect from the lakes if the water continues to drop at the rate that it is dropping at the moment. Of course, this would have substantial and long lasting environmental impacts. We are doing the best that we can to ensure that we can utilise the water that we have in the system available to us across all of the needs, and that includes the Goolwa Channel. Water will be pumped from Lake Alexandrina into the Goolwa Channel, and there will also be refill of that area from local rainfall from the Finniss River and Currency Creek.

The water that we are purchasing will be used to enhance the levels in the Lower Lakes and, of course, will flow into Lake Alexandrina. The amount of water that we are purchasing will be on a monthly basis. We will assess how much we are able to purchase. At the moment we are out there buying, and we are not impacting the market by saying how much we are buying or how much we are buying it for.