SNOWY MOUNTAINS HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER AMENDMENT BILL 1979

Date Introduced: 17 October 1979
House: House of Representatives

Purpose
To amend the finance provisions of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Power Act 1949, in particular to enable the Treasurer to guarantee borrowings by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority.

Background
The purpose of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Power Act 1949, was to set up the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority under the defence powers of the Commonwealth. The Act has its greatest application to defence research and the industrial capacity of the nation to support a defence machine as it proposes to harness a potential power of 1,720,000 kilowatts of hydro-electric power.

The Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation was set up in 1970 under the Act to carry out, on a continuous basis, the engineering consulting services which the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority had been providing for some years. The Snowy Mountains Council, which is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the completed works of the scheme, was introduced in the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation Act 1970.

Main Provisions
The Bill contains a number of provisions relating to officers and employees of the Authority. This is to bring it into line with other Commonwealth legislation relating to statutory authorities. The powers of the Authority in relation to temporary officers are modified. This is done by deleting references to temporary officers in some sections (cl.3, 6, 7 and 9) and substituting a new s.22 in place of existing ss.22, 22A and 23 (cl.8) which specifies the Authority's powers to appoint employees. Clause 5 repeals and replaces s.14 which enables the
Minister to appoint an Acting Commissioner or Acting Associate Commissioner. Previously the appointment was made by the Governor-General.

Clause 10 repeals sections 25 to 29 of the Principal Act and new sections 25 to 30B are substituted. The new sections relate to the finances of the Authority. New s.25 requires the Authority to pursue a policy directed at securing revenue sufficient to meet its expenditure. New s.26 subjects the Authority to Div. 2 of Part XI of the Audit Act. New ss.27, 28 and 29 relate to borrowings by the Authority. The Treasurer is empowered to guarantee borrowings made otherwise than from the Commonwealth (new sub.s.28(5)), a power which he did not previously have. Proposed s.30A requires the Authority to prepare annual estimates of receipts and expenditure and s.30B specifies the Authority's tax liability.

Clause 11 amends section 31 of the Principal Act by upgrading the value of any contract which the Authority may enter without the Minister's approval from $200,000 to $500,000.

7 November 1979

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LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH SERVICE