



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

Water

SPEECH

Thursday, 1 March 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Thursday, 1 March 2007
Page 160
Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms KING (Ballarat) (12.31 pm)—One of the biggest issues facing my electorate is securing a sustainable water supply. The evidence of the drought is everywhere. We have been on stage 4 water restrictions in Ballarat since November last year. Our iconic lake, Lake Wendouree, an important tourist attraction and site for sporting events in the heart of our great city, is completely dry. Farmers who have worked the land for generations are getting by on just the bare bones. Our water catchments are at 13.7 per cent. If we do not do something and we continue with the current low rainfall, Ballarat's water supply will run out by April 2008.

ABS statistics released this week further stress the need for an immediate solution to Ballarat's water crisis. Ballarat is one of the four fastest growing inland statistical districts in Australia, the other three being Mildura, Bendigo and Shepparton. Bendigo and Ballarat are adding great social and economic value to the state of Victoria. Ballarat and Bendigo are also important historic cities that hold an important place in Australia's history.

Those of you who believe regional communities can work through the drought with little impact do not appreciate the urgency or seriousness of the matter in our district. Without a sustainable long-term water supply, the lives of regional communities like Ballarat and Bendigo are literally drying up. The Howard government cannot leave us high and dry when it comes to securing a long-term water supply.

Last year on 18 October the Bracks Victorian government announced the construction of the goldfields super pipe project. The pipeline will provide Bendigo and Ballarat with a reliable and secure water supply. The pipeline is part of a wider \$204 million package that contains groundwater and recycling initiatives that will secure sustainable water supplies for our district. The pipeline will connect Ballarat's White Swan Reservoir to Bendigo's Lake Eppalock, which is currently being connected to the Goulburn-Murray system. The water will be purchased from willing sellers in the Goulburn system, which has an allocation of about one million megalitres, meaning that Ballarat will be accessing less than two per cent of the system.

I spoke to the minister at Christmas last year, asking that he look to fund the super pipe project. I did not seek to make that conversation public at the time because I wanted to provide the minister with the opportunity to consider the proposed pipeline, to gather more information as he requested and to develop a more informed view. He has had lobbying, certainly, from the City of Ballarat and also from industry groups such as MasterFoods and McCain who are desperate to secure our water supply. The minister has now had ample time and information on which to base his decision. I now ask the federal government to commit the \$90 million required to finish this goldfields super pipe to secure Ballarat's water supply so we do not run out of water in April 2008.