



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Main Committee**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Hindmarsh Electorate: Lower Murray**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 17 June 2010**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Thursday, 17 June 2010  
**Page** 5814  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Georganas, Steve, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr GEORGANAS** (Hindmarsh) (9.52 am)—I rise to speak on the future of the Lower Murray, the Lower Lakes and the Coorong in South Australia. I am pleased to see in here the member for Mayo, who has been very outspoken on this issue. As I said, the Coorong and the Lower Lakes rest in the hands of whomever forms federal government, as no South Australian government can extract or buy enough water from the eastern states to keep the river healthy, to keep the lakes from dying out and to keep the Coorong alive. This is very self-evident. South Australians need a federal government that will free up sufficient water to keep these systems and the communities that rely on them in South Australia alive. Our federal government's Murray-Darling Basin Authority is preparing a basin-wide plan to allocate water where it is needed and where we need it. The plan will decrease the volume of water that can be drained out of the rivers, leaving enough water for our river system to remain healthy.

It has become apparent that only this Labor government supports such a basin-wide plan, with upstream irrigators facing having their water entitlements cut. We have heard the Liberal-National opposition warn the country of an upcoming fight over water, a fight between farmers and the environment. They have lined up the environment in their sights and plan a bloody knock-them-down, drag-them-out fight to keep the water upriver in places in New South Wales and Queensland. They justify their fight by saying that irrigators upstream cannot afford to use less water. They even say that we, South Australians, cannot afford to have the upstream states use less water. The Liberal and National parties do not understand that it is not just the environment that they fight. In South Australia, when they fight the Murray they fight all South Australian interests.

The Liberal-National opposition spokesman, the very colourful Senator Barnaby Joyce, believes that Queensland 'actually extracts less water, I think, than South Australia or approximately the same amount'. This statement is very irresponsible. It shows that he has no idea. South Australia extracts substantially less water for agriculture than does Queensland, which extracts substantially less than does Victoria, which extracts substantially less than does New South Wales. Senator Joyce says that he has consulted with South Australians, and he says that he knows what we need. But he says that we in South Australia use more water than Queensland does, which is not true. Presumably, we do not need any more. Quite unapologetically, he says that he and his irrigator mates are looking forward to their fight with the river system on which we rely.

Barnaby Joyce says he will fight it, and by that he means he will fight us—those in the Lower Murray, the Lower Lakes and the Coorong and all of us who stand up for them and the communities that from them derive life. If Senator Joyce's opposition wants to fight South Australia, then so be it, because we cannot live without the Murray and we cannot live with the acidic destruction of the Lower Lakes and the death of our Coorong — *(Time expired)*