

House: Legislative Assembly- Premier's Statement
Date: Wednesday, 1 November 2006
Member: Quigley, Mr John; Cowper, Mr Murray; ACTING SPEAKER; Castrilli, Mr John; Kobelke, Mr John
Subject: PREMIER'S STATEMENT
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MR G.M. CASTRILLI (Bunbury): I again put on the record the proposed project to take 45 gegalitres of water from the Yarragadee aquifer for use in Perth. I have never laid claim to the ownership of water in the Yarragadee aquifer for use by Bunbury. However, there will be major impact on the aquifer and surrounding areas if that occurs. Even the Water Corporation has acknowledged the possibility of salt intrusion from this action. There is a possibility, if this project goes ahead, that a 400-metre salt water plume will form under Bunbury and the underground water will turn to salt. The effect will be felt one kilometre inland. The City of Bunbury uses water through the independent water board, Aqwest, and there is a possibility that it will not be able to pump water if this salt plume forms. Where do we go from here? I am sure that the Water Corporation would love to sell water to the Bunbury community.

Dr S.C. Thomas: What about Busselton?

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Busselton is the only other independent water board and it is in the same predicament as Bunbury. My hope is that the Water Corporation will stop what it is doing right now and take a break. It should arrange for an independent assessment. I understand it is supplying base data to consultants. Instead of supplying that data to consultants, the Water Corporation should arrange for an independent consultant to undertake the whole study. The south west community should then be made aware of the result of that study. Once we know the result, decisions can be based on that proper independent study. I can tell the minister that the people of the south west have no faith whatsoever in the information that we have been given today. One person claims one thing; another person of good repute claims another; and the community wants to know which is true. We need to know the truth of all these matters.

Dr S.C. Thomas: That will be up to the minister for gambling with the environment.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: The decision will be made by the minister.

Who is the responsible minister? Is it the Minister for Water Resources or the Minister for the Environment?

Dr S.C. Thomas: He is the only one who can stop it.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Yes, the Minister for the Environment is the only one who can stop it. Has the Minister for Water Resources received a report on this matter from the Department of Environment and Conservation?

Dr S.C. Thomas: It will be the Department of Water now.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Whatever the correct name of the department is, has the minister received a report from the Department of Environment and Conservation

saying that this project should or should not go ahead? If so, has the report been made known to anybody? I have not seen such a report. Reputable people in the south west who have been involved in the water resource business for years are telling us to be very careful because this issue will have a major impact on wetlands, the Blackwood River, salinity and a range of other things.

Dr S.C. Thomas: The Environmental Protection Authority released a very good and very big report that listed all those risks, but obviously the minister for gambling with the environment can reject those recommendations at the end of the day.

[Member's time extended.]

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I plead to the minister, very sincerely, to recognise that water is a major component and element in our world; it is one of the great issues around the world. We should be very serious and very calculated about the things we do with a primary resource. As I said, I have never claimed ownership of the water in the south west. However, it is a resource of the south west community and, as yet, no analysis has been made of its future development and use for the next 30, 50, 100 or 150 years. As far as I know, nobody has done a study, unless the member for Capel knows of one. I have not seen any study on the proposed future use of water in the south west.

Dr S.C. Thomas: The Water Corporation has done some studies and prepared some estimates, but its best-guess scenario at the end of the day is that the issue is environmental.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: Yes. I think from memory the reports say that the variance of water levels could be within four metres.

Dr S.C. Thomas: Yes, a three to six-metre drop in water levels.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: That is not a bad variance.

I plead with the minister, before he gives the go ahead to this initiative - I acknowledge that it is a resource for the state - to be absolutely sure, 100 per cent sure, of the base data. I reiterate that I want an independent study done from the base, so that the people of the south west can get the best brains to analyse and make a proper assessment of all the scientific data to determine the impacts on the water resource in the future.