

House: Legislative Assembly- Second Reading

Date: Thursday, 6 April 2006

Member: Barron-Sullivan, Mr Dan; Radisich, Ms Jaye; Grylls, Mr Brendon; Cowper, Mr Murray; Wyatt, Mr Ben; **Castrilli**, Mr John; Snook, Mr Gary

Subject: APPROPRIATION (CONSOLIDATED FUND) BILL (NO 3) 2005

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I refer now to the **Yarragadee** aquifer and the state's long-term water supply. The proposal to supply 45 gigalitres of water from the **Yarragadee** aquifer to metropolitan Perth has raised many concerns in Bunbury and the south west region. Although the south west does not claim the water as its own, it has a primary interest in making sure that long-term regional water requirements are met and environmental concerns are given proper consideration. I stress that, if the **Yarragadee** aquifer is used to supply water to the metropolitan area, the process must be done properly. No amount of money spent by the Water Corporation spin doctors will prevent me from seeking full transparency. The minister might be able to tell me later how much money the Water Corporation has spent on the **Yarragadee** publicity campaign to date. The Bunbury issue crystallised with the release of the sustainability report by Strategen. That report made it abundantly clear that Bunbury would be a major loser if the plan went ahead as proposed. The ingress of a salt water plume 400 metres inland from where the **Yarragadee** runs out into the Indian Ocean at Bunbury will in time pose a catastrophic threat to Bunbury's water supply and to AqWest, the independent body that manages, collects and distributes the water for Bunbury. AqWest has indicated that the rising salt content is a concern. Although considerable studies have been done in environmental areas such as Warren-Blackwood, not much has been done around the Bunbury area. The Water Corporation said that, given the long time frame in which the effect will be felt in Bunbury, alternatives can be found. I am sure the Water Corporation would be happy to sell Bunbury water from the **Yarragadee** pipeline. That will further entrench the Water Corporation's stranglehold on the lifeblood of the state; namely, its water. The Water Corporation's position is that the proposal should proceed under a rigid monitoring program to determine adverse effects. The lack of scientific knowledge for dealing with potential problems has not been identified as a factor requiring consideration in the project assessment. If for any reason the **Yarragadee** pipeline had to be shut down and Bunbury's capacity to tap into the **Yarragadee** was destroyed by the intrusion of salt water, what would happen? That is a major concern for the community. There is no other resource as precious as water. The Water Corporation should be more transparent and accountable. Clearly there has not been sufficient independent research and appraisal of the **Yarragadee** project.

Members of the sustainability panel have raised concerns over the lack of independent research. I am sure that the government does not really think that the people of the south west will roll over and accept this proposal. I am sure that the people of Perth will also be alarmed at the increasing number of threats attached to that proposal, because the south west is an area they also enjoy. They use it as their playground. I am sure that they do not want to see

it destroyed. Other possibilities should be explored thoroughly. I do not think other possibilities have been properly researched.

Among other options is the recycling of 104 gigalitres of water that flows to the Indian Ocean as Perth metropolitan run-off. That is being considered, and that is great. A high priority for the Water Corporation should be to expand research.

Mr A.D. McRae: Desalination plants.

Mr G.M. CASTRILLI: I am sure the government would love to build three desalination plants. The Water Corporation should step back from the issue of **Yarragadee** at the moment. Work needs to be done on more independent research, and its own research findings should be audited. I am sure all Western Australians would be happy to wait another 12 or 24 months to make sure that the decisions are right.