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MURRAY-DARLING BASIN

Mr BROCK (Frome) (12:38): I would also like to speak on the motion moved by the Premier on the Murray-Darling Basin plan and the amount of water that has been coming back in. I was very proud to become an ambassador for the River Murray. I did a launch in Port Pirie, accompanied by mayor of the District Council of Barunga West, mayor Dolling, the Port Pirie Regional Council mayor, mayor Vanstone and the mayor of the Mount Remarkable council, mayor Walker. We did a launch in Pirie to highlight the necessity, demand and requirement that not only Port Pirie but other areas of the River Murray have as they are very reliant, 100 per cent, on the health of the River Murray.

We have conversations about waterproofing Adelaide, about looking after people on the River Murray and ensuring their existence, but we seem to lose the fact that at Morgan there is a bypass, the Morgan to Whyalla pipeline. That pipeline feeds not only across into Kimba and Whyalla and Port Augusta, but also up to Roxby Downs, down to the Copper Coast, through the Clare Valley, Port Pirie and surrounding regions. I remind members that, no matter how much water we say we will get put through for the environmental flow, whether it is 2,500, 2,700, 3,000 or 4,000, there is only the same amount of water coming down that river. Water is one of the most precious items we have.

When my late wife was alive and I was a councillor on the Port Pirie Regional Council, I had the opportunity to come down to Adelaide for a water discussion at UniSA. This was many years ago, but the speaker (Professor Mike Young) was then talking about salinity on one side of the River Murray, water wars between the states, and trading of water between the states and even across all of Australia. When I went home, my late wife said, 'How did it go?' Well, I thought it was a comedy show.

That would have been 25 years ago, and that reality has come to bite us now. We have been fighting other states, fighting amongst ourselves, and fighting amongst ourselves politically and across states, but we do not act as Australians. We only have so much water and the water is there not only for human consumption but also to produce food for ourselves, our nation and for export, especially into Asia.

As I said, everybody goes on about waterproofing Adelaide. I think it is time that we understand that we have to start waterproofing Australia, full stop. We are at the tail end of the River Murray, and we have seen before when the mouth of the Murray becomes clogged up that we have to manually dredge to ensure that the flow keeps going through, because if it does not the salt will continue to bank back up. It will hit South Australia first if we do not have that clear environmental flow going through, but the other states also need to understand that it will not be many years

before that rust or decay will start to come back into the upper states and the whole of Australia's water system will be decimated.

I am very passionate about water. In fact, I have a meeting with the Premier and three other ministers this afternoon to discuss some opportunities, and I am very thankful for that. As Australians, we have to start thinking not only about the near future but also about 20 to 25 years down the track. We talk about different projects and this and that, but we have to understand that, if we do not have a continuous supply of water for the emerging resource opportunities in the top end of South Australia, we will not be able to extract those resources and grow economically.

We all keep saying that this state needs to get more money. Our credit rating has been diminished, so we need not only to explore opportunities in resources but also to realise that we are ideally situated to increase both our population and our food production. This will help to feed not only our increased population here but also in Asia. I refer to the Prime Minister's white paper on Asia that was recently released, which talked about feeding Asia.

Everyone in the community and in the house understands the importance of water. It is one of our most precious resources, and this water issue will hound politicians for generations to come if we do not get it right. This motion is to accept the amount of water, and hopefully the federal government will get it through. Comments have been made here about the Greens. We need to have a clean environment but we also need to balance that out with economic drivers and human consumption.

I hope the federal government will accept this plan. I hope that all South Australians will accept it. I hope that all of Australia accepts it and that we look at opportunities to improve it and at new ways of getting this out. As a representative of a regional area, as are my colleagues on this side, I am very passionate about this. We need to ensure that we do not divert water away from the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline, which gets water back into our area, to make certain that Adelaide is being well watered.

I think I was the only country representative who became an ambassador for the River Murray. I am very proud of that and I will continue to fight for the River Murray. I will continue to look at ideas and other ways to utilise water far better. I commend this motion to the house.