**MURRAY-DARLING BASIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL 1990**

**Legislative Assembly, 14 November 1990, page 1853**

Second reading

**The Hon. S.M. LENEHAN (Minister for Environment and Planning**) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to approve an agreement for amendment of the agreement between the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia with respect to the Murray-Darling Basin; and to amend the Murray-Darling Basin Act 1983. Read a first time.

The Hon. S.M. LENEHAN: I move: That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in Hansard without my reading it. Leave granted.

Explanation of Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to approve amendments to the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement to enable the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council to make decisions otherwise than at meetings. The council concluded some time ago that many issues for which it has responsibility should be capable of being resolved without an actual meeting of council. The benefit would be quicker decisions without the expense of its interstate members having to travel to a common meeting venue. The procedures set down in the present agreement however do not allow out of session resolutions.

It may be of interest that the council was established in November 1985 by informal agreement between the Governments of the States of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia and the Commonwealth. This was subsequently formalised through the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement 1987 which was ratified by the respective Parliaments and took formal effect on 1 January 1988. The council comprises up to 12 Ministers, three from each Government. It maintains general oversight and control over major policy issues of common interest to those Governments concerning the effective management of natural resources within the Murray-Darling Basin. Significant matters, including funding approval for major projects, require council endorsement.

After extensive negotiations between the parties, an amending agreement has been executed by the Prime Minister and the Premiers of New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria to allow out of session resolutions. This Bill seeks to ratify this agreement.

Clause 1 is formal.

Clause 2 provides for commencement on proclamation.

Clause 3 approves the amending agreements.

Clause 4 amends the definition of ‘the Agreement’ in the Act so as to include reference to this second amending agreement.

Clause 5 inserts a third schedule in the Act setting out the amending agreement.

The Hon. D.C. WOTTON secured the adjournment of the debate.