**RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST (RATING) AMENDMENT BILL 2000**

**Legislative Assembly, 24 May 2000, pages 1179-80**

Second reading

**The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL (Minister for Water Resources)** introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act 1936. Read a first time.

The Hon. M.K. BRINDAL: 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.

This Bill makes minor amendments to the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act 1936.

The Renmark Irrigation Trust Act 1936 provides for the supply, from the River Murray, of irrigation water and its subsequent drainage from privately owned properties at Renmark. The Renmark Irrigation Trust operates as a self-managed cooperative of irrigators to manage and maintain the Trust’s irrigation infrastructure and provide irrigation services within the Trust’s district at Renmark.

 The Trust has a long and commendable history of service to the community of Renmark. In line with its irrigation responsibilities, the Trust is seeking to facilitate the effective ongoing management of irrigation water resources under its control. Within this context, the principal Act provides for a restricted basis for water pricing to irrigators. At present, water rates may only comprise of a fixed dollar charge per hectare of land within the district. The liability of each individual ratepayer is therefore directly proportional to the number of hectares included in the relevant assessment and cannot be linked to the volume of water consumed or other appropriate water pricing factors. As a result, to-date the Trust has been unable to introduce a “two-part” rate structure, as commonly used by other irrigation trusts and authorities both within South Australia and interstate. Two-part rating structures are also in line with COAG’s water pricing reform principles.

In contrast, irrigation trusts operating under the Irrigation Act 1994 enjoy considerable rate setting flexibility. Under that Act, water rates may be based on one, or a combination of two or more, of the following appropriate factors:

(a) the fact that the land is connected, or the owner or occupier of the land is entitled to have it connected, to the irrigation works: or

(b) the volume of water supplied to land during the rating period to which the declaration applies; or

(c) the area of the land to be irrigated; or

(d) such other factor or factors as a Trust thinks fit.

This Bill provides for the existing rate related provisions of the Renmark Irrigation Trust Act 1936 to be amended to bring them generally into line with the more flexible rating provisions of the Irrigation Act 1994.

The proposed changes to the Renmark Irrigation Act have been the subject of extensive consultation with the Trust. In addition, in its previous three Annual Reports, the Trust has publicly advised of its intentions to move to a new two-part rating structure, subject to the passage of legislation to suitably amend the Act. The Trust has also consulted widely with its member irrigators on this subject, with general support being forthcoming.

The fine tuning of the principal Act that this Bill represents will facilitate continuing efficient management of irrigation water resources by the Renmark Irrigation Trust.

I commend this bill to honourable members.

Explanation of Clauses

*Clause 1: Short title*

*Clause 2: Commencement*

These clauses are formal.

*Clause 3: Amendment of s. 65—Power of trust to expend moneys for certain purposes*

This clause makes a consequential change to section 65 of the principal Act. The old concept of the special rate is going with the repeal of the rating sections of Part 7. From now on a special rate will only be for the purpose or repaying loans.

*Clause 4: Amendment of s. 65E—Power to construct embankments*

This clause makes a consequential change to section 65E of the principal Act.

*Clause 5: Amendment of s. 78—Assessment-book*

This clause makes a consequential change to section 78 of the principal Act.

*Clause 6: Substitution of ss. 91, 92, 93, 94, 95 and 96*

This clause replaces the rating provisions with new provisions along the lines of the provisions in the Irrigation Act 1994.

*Clause 7: Repeal of s. 124*

This clause repeals section 124 of the principal Act which is a change that is consequential on the new special rating provision.

*Clause 8: Substitution of s. 217*

This clause replaces section 217 of the principal Act with a provision that is consistent with the new rating provisions.

*Clause 9: Repeal of Schedule 3*

*Clause 10: Repeal of Schedule 7*

These clauses remove Schedules 3 and 7. These schedules are now redundant in view of the new rating provisions.

Mr WRIGHT secured the adjournment of the debate.