**UPPER SOUTH EAST DRYLAND SALINITY AND FLOOD MANAGEMENT (NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE) AMENDMENT BILL 2006**

**Legislative Council, 3 May 2006, pages 65-6**

Second reading

**The Hon. SANDRA KANCK** obtained leave and introduced a bill for an act to amend the Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Act 2002. Read a first time.

The Hon. SANDRA KANCK: I move: That this bill be now read a second time.

This is basically the same bill that I introduced in October last year—in fact, I could probably give the identical speech. It arises from the fact that up until the election was called I served on both the Environment, Resources and Development Committee and the Natural Resources Committees. I am very much aware that the ERD committee is over-loaded with work—in fact, it is so busy that despite its brief in the committees act it could do nothing else but plan amendment reports.

On the other hand, the Natural Resources Committee is very under-utilised.

One of the acts that the ERD committee oversees is the Upper South East Dryland Salinity Flood Management Act, because that act gives certain powers to the ERD committee, as follows:

1. The Environment, Resources and Development Committee of the parliament— (a) is to take an interest in—

(i) the minister’s progress in constructing the works required to implement the project; and

(ii) the effectiveness of what is being done to improve the management of water in the Upper South East; and

(iii) the extent to which the minister is achieving various milestones in the protection, enhancement and re-establishment of key environmental features through the implementation of the project; and

(iv) the manner in which the minister’s powers under this act are being exercised;

and that, for instance, means that the ERD committee has regular reports that come before it. It has also meant (particularly in the past 12 months when that project has become far more controversial) that the committee has had people from the South-East coming into parliament to give evidence before the committee, and it has also involved visiting the Upper South-East on at least two occasions to have a look at what is happening there.

It is quite an involved issue and project and, given that the ERD committee is already over-subscribed with its workload, I think it is important that some of that workload be taken off that committee and given to the Natural Resources Committee. When the Upper South East Dryland Salinity and Flood Management Act was passed in 2002 there was no Natural Resources Committee and it is my belief that, had there been, the USEDS Act (as I prefer to call it) would have referred these matters to the Natural Resources Committee rather than the ERD committee.

Having been a member of both committees, I spoke informally with other members of the two committees and asked them about their view on transferring that responsibility from the ERD committee to the Natural Resources Committee. I do not believe it went to respective party rooms or caucuses, but informally all the members said that it was a good idea. Now that we have resumed and we have newly constituted ERD and Natural Resources Committees I think it is timely that this change is made so that the new members of the Natural Resources Committee can start to get their head around this issue. It is one of major environmental consequence for this state. I hope that this time the Labor and Liberal Parties will take it back to their respective party rooms and reach agreement that this transfer should occur, and I hope that that will happen reasonably quickly.

The Hon. I.K. HUNTER secured the adjournment of the debate.