**LAKE EYRE BASIN (INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT) (RATIFICATION OF AMENDMENTS) AMENDMENT BILL 2007**

**Legislative Council, 15 November 2007. pages 1389-90**

*Second reading*

**The Hon. G.E. GAGO (Minister for Environment and Conservation, Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Minister Assisting the Minister for Health):** I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Lake Eyre Basin (the Basin) is a unique environment that is also important to South Australia's economy. Mostly arid, yet subject to some of the largest floods in the country, the Basin includes diverse landscapes, communities and economic activities. It is an area rich in Aboriginal heritage, which has continuing significance for the culture and well-being of the descendants of the early Aboriginal groups.

Environmentally significant, the South Australian portion of the Lake Eyre Basin includes the Ramsar listed Coongie Lakes wetland system. This mosaic of lakes is one of Australia's most spectacular natural attractions, and in 2005 the South Australian government declared the Coongie Lakes National Park in recognition of the importance of this area.

The rivers of the Basin sustain a variety of economic activities. Tourism, mining, pastoralism and service industries generate significant economic contributions to regional, state and national economies. This region attracts more visitor nights than any other tourism region outside of Adelaide and is an important tourism asset for South Australia. The area's marketing success relies heavily on a favourable public perception of its attractions and of how it is being managed.

The Lake Eyre Basin and surrounding area is rich in minerals and resources, development of which could contribute to meeting the major economic targets in South Australia's Strategic Plan. However, the largest economic sector in the Basin is pastoralism. In the South Australian portion of the Basin, gross annual value of pastoral production ranges from $47 million to $97 million and represents 22.5 per cent of South Australia's beef production and 4.5 per cent of sheep and wool production.

With significant economic production, fragile environments and communities' reliance on balancing the interaction between the two, the need for a system of managing the Basin as a whole is evident.

Experience in other parts of Australia and internationally has demonstrated that short-term, insular decision-making is not sustainable. Responding to the proposal for a large-scale cotton irrigation development at Cooper Creek in Queensland, South Australia became the driving force behind an initiative to develop an inter-jurisdictional agreement for the waters and related natural resources of the Lake Eyre Basin.

After some five years of negotiation, the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement was signed by South Australia, Queensland and commonwealth ministers on behalf of their respective governments on 22 October 2000. All three jurisdictions undertook to legislate to give effect to the agreement, and the South Australian Lake Eyre Basin (Intergovernmental Agreement) Act 2001 was passed by the South Australian parliament on 3 April 2001.

The purpose of the agreement is to avoid or eliminate, as far as reasonably practicable, adverse cross-border impacts on the region's water and related natural resources. The agreement has been effective in bringing together governments, communities and scientists to address natural resource management issues in the basin. Specific achievements include continued cross-jurisdictional cooperation in natural resource management and water planning, installation of three new automatic stream-gauging stations to increase understanding of surface water hydrology, the compilation of an hydrological atlas for the basin, the development of the Rivers Assessment Program to track changes in resource conditions over time, and hosting the two Lake Eyre Basin conferences and the first Lake Eyre Indigenous Forum.

These initiatives have established the cooperative environment required for regional natural resources management bodies across jurisdictions to seek and secure funding for projects to address on-ground natural resources management issues. On 10 June 2004, and after significant consultation, the Northern Territory became a party to the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement.

As a result, South Australia undertook to review the boundaries of the agreement area to complement the Northern Territory initiative. Initially, the review focused on those parts of the Lake Eyre Basin with the closest connection to the Northern Territory: Finke and Hamilton/Alberga/Macumba rivers and catchments, and Witjira National Park, Simpson Desert Conservation Park and Simpson Desert Regional Reserve.

Several individuals and organisations indicated that they were keen to see the Neales and other catchments to the west of Lake Eyre also included in the agreement. Subsequently, a second-stage review was undertaken with a view to including the Neales, Umbum, Sunny and Douglas rivers and their catchments. As there was general support for the inclusion of both the stage 1 and stage 2 areas within the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and following the approval of schedule 3 to the agreement by the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum in February 2007, the government is now pleased to introduce the Lake Eyre Basin (Intergovernmental Agreement) (Ratification of Amendments) Amendment Bill 2007. The inclusion of these additional areas demonstrates the commitment of South Australia to the agreement and provides opportunities for the cooperation and collaboration in managing catchments as a whole.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. J.M.A. Lensink.