



Speech by

CHRISTINE SCOTT

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard 7 August 2001

LAKE EYRE BASIN AGREEMENT BILL

Mrs CHRISTINE SCOTT (Charters Towers—ALP) (6.16 p.m.): I rise in support of this bill because cooperation between Queensland, South Australia and the Commonwealth is crucial in setting water resource management objectives for the Lake Eyre basin and for achieving those objectives. The Lake Eyre basin occupies 1.14 million square kilometres or about 15 per cent of the Australian continent and is the world's largest internal drainage system. The rivers of the basin are in close to pristine condition. They are largely unregulated by dams and large weirs and there are few large water extractions from them.

The basin contains a number of important environmental features. Many of those lie within South Australia, including the Ramsar-listed Coongie Lakes, but the Queensland government accepts its responsibility to manage its water resources in a way that protects the environment throughout the basin, not just in Queensland.

The agreement will enable Queensland to access a wider range of views and options when determining the resource management strategies for its part of the basin. Sustainability of this rare natural resource and the maintenance of good quality water are vital to the future health of the pastoral and tourism industries of the basin.

Under the agreement a ministerial forum will meet at least once a year. The forum will provide the opportunity to achieve an integrated approach by the three jurisdictions to the management of those basin resources with cross-border impacts.

The Commonwealth, Queensland and South Australia will meet to discuss emergent issues, to receive advice from both the communities of the basin and scientists, and to develop responses that meet the aspirations and objectives of stakeholders in both states, as well as Australia's obligations under international agreements to which we are a party. In summary, the agreement will lead to the better management of the water and related natural resources of the basin. I have no hesitation in supporting this bill.
