



**FREE WATER FROM STATE LABOR GOVERNMENT
10 August 2004**

The dropping of the 134-year-old practice of SA Water supplying Adelaide and Port Adelaide Enfield Councils with free water is still being “discussed”.

In response to a question asked recently in Parliament by the Member for Flinders Liz Penfold, Minister for Administrative Services Michael Wright said, “Discussions are currently underway.”

Mrs Penfold brought the practice to the government’s attention some time ago when Labor State Ministers were extolling water restrictions and the poor condition of the River Murray.

As long ago as 2002 an article in a city newspaper stated, “Water valued at more than \$1 million – the majority of which comes from the drought-stricken River Murray this year – is supplied free to two urban councils each year.”

The supply stems from 1870 when the councils were given free water in recognition of their help in establishing the first water supply authority, the Adelaide Water Works.

Mrs Penfold said an article in a city newspaper in December last year stated that the law providing free water was coming to an end.

“But when will ‘the end’ be? Our regional councils have much smaller rate bases and still pay for their water. The people on Eyre Peninsula have reduced water consumption and are paying the River Murray Levy as well, despite not using River Murray water.

The former Minister for the River Murray John Hill said in 2002 that even if water consumption was reduced in Adelaide by 20 per cent it would still have little impact on the Lower Lakes of the River Murray.

Mrs Penfold said this begs the question of the necessity for restrictions since Mr Hill appears to think that the little amounts saved do not have an impact.

Mrs Penfold again pointed out that the River Murray Levy has been applied to areas that don’t access river water, that continuous water restrictions apply on Eyre Peninsula, that the long awaited and promised desalination plant is yet to materialise, yet free water is unrestricted in two large metropolitan council regions.

“Where is the social justice in that,” she asked.