



29th August 2006

In reply to **Mrs PENFOLD** (9 May).

The Hon. J.D. HILL: The Minister for Correctional Services has advised:

When water tanks were initially introduced to Port Augusta Prison, they were included as part of the building plans to collect water for the prison gardens, not for drinking purposes.

The infrequency of rain in the area and the inevitable rubbish that collects on the prison roofs and run-off areas would have made the collection of water for drinking purposes very dangerous. Therefore, it was never the intention that the water collected was to be used for drinking.

The tank taps were locked to ensure that prisoners could not use the water for drinking. Unfortunately, some prisoners found ways to remove the locks and used the water for drinking purposes.

In 2002, the Department permanently diverted the water to piping and to the storm water displacement area of the prison.

I reiterate my initial response to this question when it was first raised in this House. The new legislation to which the Member refers provides for tank water to be used only in laundries, toilets and in the bathroom. It does not apply to schools and it certainly does not apply to drinking water.

9th May 2006

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Education and Children's Services guarantee that drinking water from rainwater tanks in schools—and now by government requirement in all homes—will be safe for human consumption?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PENFOLD: I have been advised that the Port Augusta Prison has disconnected its water tanks because it cannot be guaranteed that people will not drink the water, and the costs of testing the water to ensure that it is safe are too high and the risks therefore too great.

The Hon. J.D. HILL (Minister for Health): I answer this question on behalf of my colleague in the other place, the Minister for Environment and Conservation. Really, the honourable member's question is about government policy which will apply from the middle of this year and which will mean that every new house built in South Australia will be required to have a plumbed rainwater tank into the bathroom, the toilet or the laundry. However, it does not apply to schools; and, certainly, it does not apply to drinking water. The question really is about existing practice.

If any building has a rainwater tank and that water is being used for drinking purposes, the operator of the building has a duty to make sure that it is safe. Certainly, no change in government policy would see rainwater tank water being used for consumption.

Mrs PENFOLD: As a supplementary question—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs PENFOLD: My question is to the Minister for Health. The Port Augusta Prison's water was not for consumption: it was to be used on the garden. It was not as if it was for drinking, it was for use on the garden. It is just that it could not be guaranteed that it would not be drunk and therefore it was a risk.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Flinders has the call. Was there a question?

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member for Flinders' question?

Mrs PENFOLD: Why then was it closed down? The Port Augusta Prison water has been disconnected when it was not for drinking: it was for the garden. So, why was it disconnected if it was not a risk? It was too dangerous for the prisoners and okay for our students.

The Hon. J.D. HILL: One thing that is very clear is that the opposition's tail is a very long one! I will get a report from the minister responsible for prisons for the honourable member.