



HF Radio System 3 June 2004

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Transport advise the house when she will respond to my question regarding the outcome of the Australian Maritime Group's evaluation of Coast Radio Adelaide and the government's response to any of the issues that the report identified some months ago. In reply to my question, the minister stated: I will check on that correspondence and bring back a considered reply.

The Hon. P.F. CONLON (Minister for Infrastructure): On behalf of the Minister for Transport, who is not present in the chamber, I will bring back a reply. I do not have that detail in my mind.

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I believe that the Minister for Transport is in this chamber, and when a question is being asked I imagine that he would take—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Transport—

The Hon. D.C. KOTZ: I apologise. I am quite happy to apologise when I am wrong. *Members interjecting:*

The SPEAKER: Order! All members accept.

HF Radio System 27 May 2004

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the minister advise the house of the outcome of the Australian Maritime Group's evaluation of Coast Radio Adelaide and the government's response to any issues that the report identified? On 24 December last year I again wrote to the minister expressing my concerns about Coast Radio Adelaide, particularly as the dedicated, long-serving volunteer coastguard at Louth Bay, Mike Dinon, was no longer able to fulfil this role due to ill-health. I have heard nothing to allay my concerns that a dangerous situation exists.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE (Minister for Transport): The member is referring to correspondence that was not sent—

Mrs Penfold: It has been re-sent.

The Hon. P.L. WHITE: I will check on that correspondence and the issue that the member raises and bring back a considered reply.

HF RADIO SYSTEM 4 December 2002

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): I seek leave to make a ministerial statement. Leave granted.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT: Last Wednesday, 27 November, in response to a question by the member for Flinders about marine radio, I referred to a letter I had written to the federal Minister for Transport, the Hon. John Anderson, which in fact I did on 20 September. In my response, I stated that a copy of that correspondence had been provided to the member. The member subsequently made a grievance the following day indicating that she had not received from me a copy of the letter that I had sent to the Hon. John Anderson. Although I had not made that specific statement, I understand that the member could have taken it to mean that. Further, at the time of writing to John Anderson, I had instructed my staff that the member be provided with a copy of the letter, and I sincerely believed that to have occurred.

On checking records in my office, I can find no written record of it having been provided direct to her and, therefore, I extend to her my apologies for that oversight. I believe that the member also indicated that she did not have a copy of the reply from John Anderson, so I have arranged for a copy to be provided to her. I regret that the member believes that she was misrepresented, and it was certainly not my intention to do so.

HF RADIO SYSTEM 28 November 2002

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I seek leave to make a personal explanation. Leave granted.

Mrs PENFOLD: I believe that I was misrepresented during question time by the Minister for Transport when he claimed that my question yesterday regarding the HF radio was inaccurate. I refer to the point of the correspondence to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. John Anderson, as Minister for Transport and Regional Services. It is true that I received a copy of the correspondence, but it was not from the Minister for Transport: it was from the *Port Lincoln Times* which wanted me to comment on it. According to all my records, I have not received a copy of the letter from the minister's office nor the response from the Deputy Prime Minister referred to. Briefings have been rare and inadequate. In regard to the first one with the minister's staff person and a departmental person, the information provided on that occasion was not from them to me but from Bill Berkhuizen in Port Lincoln on speaker phone and me to them.

HF RADIO SYSTEM 27 November 2002

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Transport advise when he will provide the house and my constituents with additional information regarding the operational status of the HF radio system? On 5 July, I wrote to the minister regarding the operational status of the emergency radio station Coast Radio Adelaide. On 5 August, I wrote to the Premier requesting further action and clarification of the matter. On 15 August, I asked the minister to confirm when the emergency radio system would be fully operational and asked what actions the government was undertaking to solve the problem. The minister advised the house as follows: I do not have a clue what the answer is; I will try to get the answer and bring it back to you.

I did not receive a satisfactory answer. So, again, on 15 October, I asked the minister whether the government had been able to have the reception of the emergency radio signals improved. Again, the minister said he would 'bring back additional information for the honourable member and the house'. Again, this did not occur. More than four months after my first letter, the cray season has begun and tuna boats will be joining the cray fleet in the Great Australian Bight in less than a week. As reported in the *Advertiser*, two men from a shark boat are already missing, presumed dead, in the known emergency radio black spot in the Bight.

Mr Brokenshire interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Mawson is warned.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): I thank the member for Flinders for her question. The member has raised this issue a number of times both in and outside the parliament. It would be fair to say that she may not have received the answer that she wants to hear, but she certainly has been provided with updated information on a regular basis, so I do not think the piece that she just put before the chamber reflects true accuracy *The Hon. I.F. Evans interjecting:*

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT: And I am about to. As I just said, before the interruption from the member for Davenport, there has been ongoing dialogue with respect to this issue and, as the member for Flinders knows full well, that information has been provided to her on a regular basis. Briefings have been organised, and additional information that the member for Flinders and people in her electorate have kindly provided to me has been provided to TSA and the federal government. This is an ongoing issue. We are working hard at this, and I hope that the member for Flinders appreciates that.

The member for Flinders has asked a detailed question, and I would like to provide a detailed answer. Before July 2002, emergency marine radio communications were provided via a federally funded Telstra coastal radio network. On 1 July 2002 this system ceased operation, leaving states responsible for providing marine distress and safety radio services for recreational fishing and small commercial trading craft. Decisions by the federal government and subsequently by the Australian Transport Council were taken before my appointment as Minister for Transport. However, I am aware that the Australian Transport Council resolved in November 1999 that the Telstra service would be extended to June 2005 or until a suitable technical solution was identified. The decision not to extend the Telstra contract beyond June 2002 was made for financial and technical reasons but has meant that the states have had to implement an interim HF marine radio network until at least June 2005. The federal government has met the set-up costs of the interim HF radio network, but to save money it has brought forward the cessation of the Telstra network from 2005 to 2002.

Through the Australian Maritime Group, South Australia has helped establish the state based replacement HF Marine Radio Network. A base at Port Augusta, Coast Radio Adelaide, was recommended to Transport SA as being necessary to overcome a historic lack of reliable coverage on the West Coast. This station was also to provide a redundancy for the national network stations in Perth and Melbourne. Following technical difficulties and equipment delays, Coast Radio Adelaide began operating on 19 August this year. The state's HF marine radio network now operates to specification. However, the member for Flinders raised concerns that the new replacement HF emergency radio system has not overcome communication problems in the Eyre Peninsula area, especially in the Great Australian Bight. In response to those concerns, a number of actions are under way. In September, I wrote to the commonwealth Minister for Transport and Regional Services, John Anderson, about Coast Radio Adelaide concerns, and those of the West Coast in particular, and sought his cooperation in auditing the design, deployment and operation of Coast Radio Adelaide. A copy of that correspondence went to the member. Mr Anderson replied on 31 October indicating that Australian Search and Rescue, within the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, would provide advice to Transport SA to evaluate the HF marine network. Unsurprisingly, Mr Anderson distanced himself from any suggestion of financial assistance.

In the meantime, Transport SA has been working with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, equipment suppliers and vessel owners to identify whether there are any problems with emergency coverage. An issue raised by the Royal Flying Doctor Service concerned the lack of time the scan function on the radio monitoring equipment allowed them to identify and respond to incoming calls. Transport SA and the Royal Flying Doctor Service, together with equipment suppliers, have designed new software to better suit these requirements. This software was fully installed on 11 October of this year, and tests show a significant improvement to incoming calls responses. Transport SA is also intending to add an extra frequency to the HF marine radio system—channel 2182—to improve coverage at night. Transport SA has also forwarded a survey to all vessels with HF radio. To date only a limited number of responses have been received, but preliminary feedback is promising.

South Australia is not alone. Most states are concerned with the level of service left by the commonwealth's withdrawal. The level of concern has resulted in the National Standing Committee on Transport agreeing that the Australian Maritime Group would reactivate its technical working group to conduct a systems evaluation of the national coastal safety radio monitoring system and respond to any issues identified. The Australian Maritime Group will be meeting at the end of this week on Friday 29 November.

In closing I note and share the honourable member's concern with obtaining appropriate safety radio monitoring, not just for the West Coast, but for all South Australia. Finally, I would like to share with the house that at the last Australian Transport Council meeting, about three weeks ago—I cannot remember exactly—I also raised this issue directly with the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson.

HF EMERGENCY RADIO SIGNALS 15 October 2002

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Transport advise the house whether he has been able to have the reception by Radio Adelaide of the HF Emergency radio signals improved to ensure that they will be heard particularly in the area of the Great Australian Bight if there is an emergency in South Australian seas?

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): I thank the member for Flinders for her ongoing work with regard to this issue, because she has drawn it not only to my attention but also to the attention of the house and has been able to highlight some ongoing problems, some of which are being addressed. However, more work needs to be done. As the member for Flinders—and I think the house generally—is aware, there is a previous arrangement with the federal government which has resulted in the state government having some additional responsibilities. Nonetheless, I think the member is aware that I have written to the federal government, and we are having ongoing discussions. We have not fully resolved some of those difficulties, but I think we are progressing positively. I will bring back additional information for the honourable member and the house.

HF RADIO - COAST RADIO ADELAIDE 15 August 2002

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): Will the Minister for Transport advise the house when Coast Radio Adelaide, located at Port Augusta, will be fully operational, and what actions the government will undertake to ensure that this occurs before lives are lost as a result of the seven weeks of inaction? I have been informed that the new state run emergency radio station, Coast Radio Adelaide, is not operational. The new distress system was supposed to be operational on 1 July, but I am told that there are still problems related to equipment and training qualifications, rendering the station practically useless. I have also been informed that there are some real concerns that, even if the station were operational, it is located too far from the open ocean of the bight to pick up the radio distress signals from most recreational and fishing boats that might be in trouble there.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Transport): This is a very good question. I do not have a clue what the answer is, but I will try to get the answer and bring it back for you.