



PORT KENNY WATER
6 July 2005

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): When it comes to one of the most basic human needs, potable water, some South Australians are less equal than others. City dwellers and those who live in large regional centres take for granted that they can turn on a tap and get drinkable mains water. However, go to the smaller regional towns and it is a different story. If you live at Port Kenny or Venus Bay on the West Coast or you are among the hundreds of visitors to the area, potable water is nothing but a pipe dream. With the assistance of Elliston District Council, the residents of Port Kenny had to help pay for a system that pumps water from a bore. This was installed in 1988 at a bore four kilometres from the town, and initially residents had to cart their own water.

In 1991, water was piped into the township into storage tanks and a standpipe and residents still had to cart their water from these facilities. There are 66 consumers in the scheme, of which 10 are businesses. In 1997, a township water plan was installed that provided water to each township block. The condition of supply was that each property had a meter and water went into a storage tank. Water was charged at \$1.50 per kilolitre up to 138 kilolitres, and \$5 for usage over 138 kilolitres. This water is not drinkable, as it is quite saline. This water supply system is only a short-term solution to a long-term problem.

A report commissioned by the Elliston District Council in 2000 found that the existing use of the bore was outstripping the recharge rate by at least one megalitre per year and it could only supply the town for a very limited time. This is despite the fact that residents and businesses are under permanent water restrictions. There are about 25 permanent residents in Venus Bay and thousands of visitors in the summer, and they have to rely solely on rainwater tanks, which can run out in dry years. Only the Venus Bay caravan park and public toilets have an alternative water supply from a nearby bore provided by council.

Local businesses, particularly the hotel and caravan park in both towns, are restricted in the services they can offer because of the lack of water and its poor quality. New houses cannot be built in Port Kenny until more water is available. The small school that services the area is down to 11 students, and it is in danger of closure. The nearest alternative schools will be at Elliston or Streaky Bay—both over 100 kilometres away and too far for small children to travel every day.

The potential to grow these towns, enabling more schoolchildren, council ratepayers and SA Water customers, is once again being severely constrained by SA Water and this state Labor government's policies. Elliston District Council is now seeking expressions of interest from companies to provide desalination to help ease the water crisis. However, even if desalination can be provided, the council and residents will struggle to afford the full costs.

Ms Breuer interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order, the member for Giles!

Mrs PENFOLD: The Elliston council covers 6 963 square kilometres, and it is responsible for 1 146 kilometres of unsealed roads and national parks, but it is funded by only 807 principal ratepayers. Last year, in parliament, I asked the Minister for Administrative Services what could be done to provide water to Port Kenny and Venus Bay. His reply was that SA Water could provide some advice to the council but nothing else. To quote the minister: *The final solution will be one that the community can support financially and is environmentally sustainable.*

In other words, the minister says that, if the people of Port Kenny and Venus Bay want a water supply, they have to pay for it themselves. That contradicts the charter of SA Water—

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The house is becoming disorderly. **Mrs PENFOLD:** —which states that its aim is to provide quality water services and optimise the geographic and population coverage of those services. SA Water is charged with providing water for growth, development and quality of life for all South Australians. My emphasis is on all South Australians. SA Water cannot fulfil its vision because it is dictated to by the government, which requires SA Water to maximise its payments into general revenue—

Ms Breuer interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Giles is out of her seat and out of order. **Mrs PENFOLD:** —currently estimated to be \$292 million in the recent 2005-06 budget.

Time expired.

WATER, VENUS BAY/PORT KENNY

22 July 2004

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): My question is to the Minister for Administrative Services. Will the minister ensure that the Venus Bay and Port Kenny communities will be supplied with adequate safe water this summer? The Port Kenny and Venus Bay communities rely on underground water. A study done in November 1999 by Sinclair Knight Merz stated, 'Current water systems are fully utilised and it is not feasible to extend these systems.' Both townships rely heavily on tourism and notices of unpotable water do not assist this industry. There are also health issues. The situation is now critical.

The Hon. M.J. WRIGHT (Minister for Administrative Services): I thank the member for her very important question. Obviously, it is a very sensitive issue, particularly for the geographical area that the member refers to, and I understand the priority that she raises with it. I will need to take some advice from SA Water about this issue, and I am happy to do so. There are just no simple solutions to issues of the complexity of the one that the member raises, but I will get some advice from SA Water, and I will confer with the member during the break about that detail.