



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

**WATER EFFICIENCY LABELLING AND
STANDARDS AMENDMENT BILL 2010**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Thursday, 24 February 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Thursday, 24 February 2011 Page 38 Questioner Speaker Rishworth, Amanda, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
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Ms RISHWORTH (Kingston) (1.26 pm)—I rise today to speak in favour of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Amendment Bill 2010. This bill is about conserving our most precious resource, which is water, by redefining the way we provide information to consumers about water efficiency or various plumbing products. By passing the bill, we can reduce confusion and empower consumers. We can provide greater certainty for industry and ultimately we can promote the adoption of effective water use to assist with our water conservation efforts.

The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Scheme, established by the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005, aims to promote the use of water-saving technologies by requiring specific products be labelled to indicate and assess their water efficiency. As with energy-rating labels on electrical appliances, a six-star rating system is used to demonstrate the performance of the product, with six being the most water or energy efficient. This is a simple concept designed to empower consumers to select a product on the basis of its efficiency.

Since its introduction in 2005, and since it became mandatory in July 2006, there has been significant evidence suggesting that the scheme positively influences preferences. The Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities determines which products must comply with the scheme, and some of the products which are currently covered include showers, toilets, urinals, taps, dishwashing machines and clothes washing machines.

In addition to meeting the requirements of this scheme, these products are subject to the WaterMark certification scheme, which operates under state and territory plumbing regulations. As the WaterMark certificate is concerned with protecting the water supply by ensuring the products are fit for use, it is only required for products to be legally installed. On the contrary, the WELS registration and labelling is required before a product can be sold. This creates an anomaly, as consumers unwittingly purchase WELS plumbing products which are legally available but not legally able to be installed.

Furthermore, some consumers may misinterpret the WELS label as an endorsement of the product by the

government that it is fit for us. It is this situation that has led the House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment and Heritage to recommend, in its 2007 report, *Managing the flow: regulating plumbing product quality*, that the WaterMark certification be made a prerequisite of the compliance with the WELS scheme. If this bill is passed it will do just that.

The proposed amendments will introduce a general provision enabling the minister to include additional plumbing requirements, such as those established by the states and territories, and, from time to time, requirements for registration under the WELS scheme. Naturally, the minister will retain the right to remove any additional requirements should they be no longer appropriate. Once the bill is enacted, the WaterMark certification can be made a prerequisite for all WELS scheme registered plumbing products by ministerial determination.

There is strong support for the introduction of a general provision of this kind within the industry. It will create greater certainty for both consumers and plumbers and ultimately it will mean more water conservation. This government is preparing Australia for a future with less water as a result of climate change and as a result of drought. Water is one of our most precious resources. As a member from South Australia I know that acutely. We must do everything in our power to secure our supplies for future generations. We need to act now not only to protect and restore the environment but also to secure the health of our rivers so that all Australians can continue to enjoy this vital resource well into the future.

This government has been getting on with the job of conserving our water resources. Since coming to office this government has introduced significant initiatives to ensure that securing our water supplies is our top priority. It has introduced a number of initiatives aimed at restoring the balance in the Murray-Darling Basin, which has one of our most valuable river systems and our nation's food bowl.

The government has looked at initiatives, including water buybacks. I was disappointed to hear the member for Murray criticise this so acutely in her report. We know that the opposition have been quite flippant when it comes to water buybacks. In the election period we saw the Leader of the Opposition come to South

Australia and say that he would implement the Murray-Darling Basin report immediately. In fact, I think he indicated that he would implement it in full two weeks after the election. We have seen an enormous backflip from the opposition. They are now scrapping the water buybacks. The Leader of the Opposition has clearly given every South Australian who actually believed the commitment he made when he came to South Australia a slap in the face. It is disappointing.

This government is getting on with the job by having water buybacks, investing in water-saving infrastructure, having the independent authority come up with a plan and working through the parliament to ensure we have a Murray-Darling River system for the future. The member for Murray in her statement missed the point that a river that is dying, that has salt problems and that is destroyed is of no use to anyone. It is of no use to the farmers, the environment or the people who rely on the river for water. It is of no use to anyone. I hope the member for Murray considers that when she goes around opposing water buybacks.

The government is also working in a whole range of other areas. In my electorate there has been significant investment in how we use water in a better way. I was very pleased that this government provided the Onkaparinga Council with \$34.5 million for Waterproofing the South stage 1. This program looks at how we can recycle water to irrigate the McLaren Vale region, our parks and gardens and a range of different areas. This program has been going very well. We recycle the sewage water from the Christies Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant and that fresh water is used for a whole lot of different purposes, including watering gardens on private properties and the like. That has been a very successful project.

I am also pleased that this government has backed up its commitment by investing \$14.97 million for stormwater harvesting in the Onkaparinga River. This is a joint project of the City of Onkaparinga, the state government and the federal government. It looks at how we can harvest stormwater and not just let it go into the sea, which causes its own problems when it comes to the local ecology. It looks at how we can capture that water and reuse it on parks, gardens and the like. This is really important because the city of Adelaide relies, especially in years of drought, on water from the River Murray. The more we conserve water, whether it is rainwater or recycled water, the less our pull will be on the River Murray.

I commend the City of Onkaparinga for doing a great job in this area. The wonderful McLaren Vale agricultural region, which provides a huge amount of wonderful wine, is starting to insure itself against drought by using recycled water and stormwater. It is a visionary project. It is preparing the city and the

suburbs for less water in the future. I commend that program.

The government has also recognised significantly that individuals can play a big role in conserving water. It has been fantastic to see families and residents in my local community taking up the rebates offered by the government that subsidise the installation of water tanks and greywater systems. We recognise that these small changes to household water use can make a big difference when put together. I want to particularly commend a couple of the surf-lifesaving clubs in my area, which have successfully obtained money under the National Rainwater and Greywater Initiative: the Aldinga Bay Surf Lifesaving Club and the South Port Surf Life Saving Club. They have installed rainwater tanks and other water efficiency measures.

Surf-lifesaving might not seem to be too connected to the environment but the lifesavers who are on the beach every day see what happens when stormwater goes out into the sea and a lot of debris is washed up on the beach. The surf-lifesaving clubs are acutely aware of the impact that stormwater can have on their beaches. They have been very keen to take up these water initiatives. I know there is a focus in surf-lifesaving clubs in my area to be very ecofriendly, so they are taking up these initiatives to make an impact.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Southport Surf Life Saving Club, which won the cleanest beach in Australia competition. They do a great job down there. They get schoolchildren coming in to help with cleaning up the beach and really making this a wonderful destination. So if you have not been to Southport Surf Lifesaving Club, or Port Noarlunga South as it is sometimes known, come on down; it is a beautiful place to come. But they are doing their bit for water efficiency.

There are a number of other initiatives in my electorate, including the Woodcroft Green Precinct at the combined library and neighbourhood centre. This is a very exciting initiative which is incorporating best practice design features in water conservation, water recycling, and a whole range of areas. But they are not just doing that for the community centre that is being used there; they are putting it on as a demonstration hub so that families and individuals can come in, have a look at what they are doing and get some ideas and take them back home. This is a very exciting project. The Commonwealth has contributed \$750,000 to this. Again, the council is contributing money to it. I am looking forward to the opening of the Woodcroft Green Precinct in the coming months. I certainly think it is another exciting project.

There are a number of very exciting projects happening in my local area, all focused on conserving

water and ensuring that we are as efficient as possible with this very important resource. Certainly this bill is a very important bill. It is part of the government's agenda in ensuring that we take the issue of using our water in the most efficient possible way very seriously. I commend the bill to the House.