**MURRAY-DARLING BASIN BILL 1993**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, 30 APRIL 1993, PAGE 2231**

**Second Reading**

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

The Hon. ANNE LEVY (Minister for the Arts and Cultural Heritage): I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I seek leave to have the second reading explanation inserted in Hansard without my reading it.

Leave granted.

On 24 June 1992 the Prime Minister and Premiers of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales signed a new agreement as the basis for cooperative and coordinated planning and management of the water, land and other environmental resources of the Murray-Darling Basin. This agreement consolidates and replaces the River Murray Waters Agreement of 1982 and its subsequent amendments as well as adding some further provisions.

This new agreement, the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement 1992, is still to be ratified by the Federal Parliament, the Parliament of Victoria and this Parliament. A Bill ratifying the agreement has been passed by the New South Wales Parliament. The Bill now before the House approves and provides for the carrying out of the new agreement, and repeals the Murray- Darling Basin Act 1983.

The new agreement is an extension of the current agreement. Although it retains most of the existing provisions as they are, it modifies the current agreement in six important areas:

* it broadens the role of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council and Commission in the measurement, monitoring and investigation of water, land and environment resources
* it provides for other States, such as Queensland, to become parties to the agreement
* it provides for the implementation of specific strategies such as the Natural Resources Management Strategy and the Salinity and Drainage Strategy to become schedules to the new agreement
* it provides for a more business-like approach to the management of the financial resources of the Murray- Darling Basin Commission, including flexibility for the Ministerial Council to determine alternative cost sharing formulae if that is thought to be appropriate in any particular instance
* it overhauls the water distribution clauses so that water used by NSW and Victoria is accounted for on a continuous basis
* it provides for the appointment of an independent President of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, in lieu of the current arrangement whereby a Commonwealth Commissioner automatically becomes President.

I commend the Bill to the House.

The Hon. R.I. LUCAS secured the adjournment of the debate