**RIVER MURRAY WATERS AGREEMENT SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT BILL 1963**

**Legislative Council, 31 October 1963 page 1402**

Second reading

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

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government) : I move:

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to ratify and approve an agree­ment made between the Commonwealth and the States of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia concerning the utilization for a period of seven years of water from the Menindee storage on the River Darling. The Bill itself is very short, providing only by clause 5 for ratification and approval of the the agreement is set out in the schedule to the Bill. With the growing demand for water from the River Murray in the three riparian States serious shortages could occur before the Chowilla reservoir is completed and becomes effective. The length of the intervening period will depend upon the rate of construction of the Chowilla dam and river flows in the years immediately following completion of the work In the circumstances it is possible that the Chowilla dam will make no useful contribution until the year 1970, and steps should be taken to safeguard supplies up to that time.

During the course of a conference held in Canberra in April, 1962, the Premier of New South Wales offered to make available the Menindee storage on the River Darling for operation as a River Murray Commission work for a limited period. The River Murray Commission recommended acceptance of this offer and agreement was subsequently reached in regard to the terms and conditions under which this storage would be utilized to augment supplies. The Commonwealth and the three States concerned agreed that this would best be brought about by the signing and ratification of an agreement supplemental to the River Murray Waters Agreement.

The total capacity of the four Menindee storages is 1,470,000 acre feet, and the agree­ment provides that any water stored in excess of 390,000 acre feet will be available for distribution by the River Murray Commission in accordance with the provisions of the principal agreement. This means that in times of shortage the three States will share equally any water released from the Menindee storage in terms of this supplemental agreement.

The River Murray Commission will pay to the State of New South Wales £160,000 per annum in equal quarterly instalments, and is addition will meet three-quarters of the cost of maintenance work necessary to keep the storage in good order and condition. The total annual cost to each State will be approximately £60,000, which is considered to be a reasonable premium to pay in return for insurance against the serious consequences of a severe drought. The term of the supplemental agreement is seven years from January 1 1963.

In moving the second reading I commend the Bill to Honourable members.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH secured the adjournment of the debate.