



NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

EP WATER SUPPLY INQUIRY

Port Lincoln Hotel, Lincoln Highway, Port Lincoln

Thursday 8 November 2012 at 9:00am

**(OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT)
PARLIAMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

MEMBERS:

Hon. S.W. Key MP (Presiding Member)
Hon. R.L. Brokenshire MLC
Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins MLC
Hon. G.A. Kandelaars MLC
Mr G.G. Brock MP
Mr L.K. Odenwalder MP

WITNESS:

CLYDE SHIPARD, resident, Cowell, called and examined:

749 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you for your attendance here today. The committee is a standing committee of the parliament of South Australia. Its powers and functions are set out in the Parliamentary Committees Act 1991. Sections 28 and 31 of the Parliamentary Committees Act set out the privileges, immunities and powers of this committee and the protections afforded to witnesses. Section 26 of the Parliamentary Committees Act provides that members of the public may be present during the examination of witnesses. A request to make a statement in private will be considered by the committee and, if agreed to, members of the public will be asked to leave the room for the duration of that statement. I don't know whether you want to take up that option.

Mr SHIPARD: I don't think it is necessary.

750 The PRESIDING MEMBER: The transcript of these proceedings will be available to the public once you have had an opportunity to make sure they are factually correct. As you know, our committee is looking at the Eyre Peninsula water supply. So could I ask you to introduce yourself and then proceed with your presentation?

Mr SHIPARD: Thank you. My name is Clyde Shipard; I am actually an ex-farmer. I've been retired off the land for about 10 years. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present a submission to the EP water supply inquiry and also, secondly, to be given the opportunity to meet and discuss this submission. With no prejudice or condemnation to whoever has attempted to summarise this submission, I wish to point out the difficulty that anybody would have in providing a useful summary with full meaning and correct text, considering the time I spent putting this submission together in a manner I was happy with. This leaves me wondering the value of shortening a submission to a summary. I highlighted questionable points on a copy of the summary of my submission and then decided I am only here to discuss the submission.

751 The PRESIDING MEMBER: I am not sure of the point you are making. It is up to you to present what you think is appropriate today.

Mr SHIPARD: What I'm saying is that my submission being shortened down has variable meaning in the short text that it was in, so what I am going back to is that I am hoping that everybody has read the summary and that's what we are really here to talk about.

752 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you.

Mr SHIPARD: I have taken a few points from the submission. On page 8 of my submission, there have been recent updates on the EP water future, indicating a new water resource will not be required until 2023. This is explained to be due to the reduction of water consumption by 26.9 per cent during the last 10 years.

This reduction in consumption, and the recent fitment of various pressure reducing devices, have me wondering how likely it is that any increase in demand could be met if we experience population increase, the effect of CWMS or a drought. Interestingly, if 26.9 per cent reduction in consumption would equate to a 42 per cent rise in price of water to meet the working expenditures of SA Water, I have a question then that comes from this: what can be done to

reduce SA Water's expenses to make our water more affordable if they only have intentions of reducing consumption as a long-term solution? Less consumption should mean a lesser cost.

I also would like to know why the reduction in demand over 10 years did not equate to enough water to get us past 2010 without water restrictions if now we have sufficient water until 2023. These allocations and calculations are questionable, because this reduction could even be assumed to be a result of the favourable conditions, seasonal conditions, and result in wild seasonal fluctuations again before 2023.

There was an involvement in the submission with regard to the CWMS, too, and the effects I believe that will have on our water supply too. Council appears to still be searching for somewhere to dispose of the CWMS recycled water. This is very hard to comprehend when you and I are here today and we see a need to be here to discuss the future of our water supply on EP. There must be something wrong with our planning and management strategies of CWMS water for this to be happening. We are obviously on opposite pages and not working together.

I do have from where we are going on here, some maps that I can pass round the table for you to look at. They are actually aerial photographs. There are only three of them there.

753 The PRESIDING MEMBER: These are aerial photographs from where, Mr Shipard?

Mr SHIPARD: From my farm 10 years ago, that I sold, back to 1950. My father took the farm over and I've had the experience of that farm over that period of time. I'd like to emphasise that I am intending to make no attempt to invade the privacy of the new owner, so what I'm saying is pre-2001.

754 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Okay, so you shifted in 2001, didn't you?

Mr SHIPARD: Yes, I moved into the town.

755 The PRESIDING MEMBER: I guess the other thing is, just before we accept this, where did the photo come from?

Mr SHIPARD: It's one of the lands department aerial photographs.

756 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Okay, so that's the source of that photograph?

Mr SHIPARD: Yes.

757 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Geoff's looking like he is going to move and John is seconding that we accept this as evidence into our inquiry.

Moved by Mr Brock.

Seconded by Hon. J.S.L. Dawkins.

Carried.

Mr SHIPARD: If you look at that, the red line around it is the perimeter of the farm. There is a green line around which is actually—sorry, on the eastern side of the farm there was the Ullabidinie Reservoir weir which was one of the water sources for Cowell in the early days. The green line on the map on the photograph is basically the catchment area for that reservoir so it's only more or less just in and out of the boundary of the farm, and basically the farm was the catchment for that, therefore, the area of land was relatively confined to that catchment.

The other things that perhaps I'll point out at this stage are (a) down the bottom, the red dot, is the house with a rain gauge on it, and (b) is the other rain gauge that was put out in the hills in 1988. If you go over the pages there are actually rainfall records for Cowell done up by the Lions Club as official rainfall records for 100 years. Those figures I've highlighted, the below the average figures, and it turns out in the 100 years, there are 61 years below average, and 16 years below 770 points which was the 2008 rainfall. My point here is to bring to your notice that the rainfall figures are relatively fluctuating, and they have fluctuated since the time of records.

I can't see from these figures—and going to the back page I've written some figures down that I've calculated from these—over the 65 years up to 1950, our average was 10 inches and 92 points; 100 years is 1,103 points; 1886 to 1895, which is the record on that sheet, 1,110; 126 years, 1,102. It hasn't altered much with the exception, if you shorten it down to a

10-year average—these are Cowell's records—from 2002 to 2011, it was only 997, and that is a drop, but if you go back through the records, there are drops like this in average over 10-year periods back in the 1940s too. So I don't believe that we can relate to climate change out of our rainfall figures as affecting our altering water tables and that is really the guts of what I'm trying to say with these figures.

I will just go on to read what I've also written down here before we ask for questions from the table. In reference to pages one, two and 14 of my submission, there is a bit of a further explanation which relates to this map. I felt that perhaps the summary was taken a little bit out of context, and I thought I ought to clarify this. Our property in the Cowell hills was mostly on the Ullabidinie Reservoir. I saw this reservoir and catchment, that was a useful part of the water supply for Cowell until about the 1960s, slowly become drier for longer periods and also actually be classified too salty. Now I am not sure if the too salty bit is because the salt levels rose dramatically or if the required quality levels also altered making this water less usable.

This is one of the local weirs, which I spoke about in the submission, that was backed up by the Tod Reservoir which then ultimately became the main supply. I saw this water supply disappear and it was hard to accept or explain but I believe that it became obvious later that the change of land use, management and vegetation were responsible for the changes to surface and groundwater. There is an old saying, 'You can't have your cake and eat it, too.'

What I'm trying to say here is that if you're using the water up it's not in the underground table. There is absolutely no reason to link this change to global warming, climate change or drought. If the water has been used it cannot be in the watertable. On a self-watered farm such as my old farm, this change and demand for water has already caused a demand on other water sources from other parts of Eyre Peninsula. As I have identified, they have slowly moved over to Tod. That's not saying that the farm got water because there was no way that I could get SA Water to hook me up.

I will invite questions and discussion from the room regarding these comments and the submission. I am not sure, after reading the article in *The Tribune* on the 18th of the 10th—and I will leave a copy of that article here for you.

758 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Could you tell us basically what the article is about?

Mr SHIPARD: It's the article with regard to the fact that the inquiry had heard submissions, etc., and it was in *The Tribune* on the 18th. They have sort of indicated there that there is a division in the community with opinions about our water situation.

759 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Do you think that's an opinion that you would share?

Mr SHIPARD: I think there probably is, yes. I don't really know whether that means that I'm here because the inquiry has already reached a conclusion or whether it means that I'm here for a grilling about my opinion.

760 The PRESIDING MEMBER: No, I can assure you we haven't.

Mr SHIPARD: I'll throw it open for any questions or anything about the submission.

761 The PRESIDING MEMBER: I can assure you that that is not the case. We only see ourselves as being probably halfway through this inquiry.

Mr SHIPARD: I'm not trying to fire you up about it, in that sense, but what I am saying is that an article like that came out in the paper and I thought, 'Where are we at? I haven't even been to the hearing yet.' But I am saying that I am here to see whether we can talk any more about this because I would like you to understand where I'm coming from.

762 The PRESIDING MEMBER: For sure.

Mr SHIPARD: I believe that the changes are from other things besides simply and plainly global warming and things like that. Yes, there's extra demand on our water but there's a lot of other things happening, I think, with our water as well that is not being explained and not looked at.

763 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you. Your submission is submission No.2 so you are pretty high up there in the submissions we have received, so thank you for that. Mr Brock, I think you wanted to ask a question.

764 Mr BROCK: No, I'm fine. Mr Shipard has clarified that now.

765 The PRESIDING MEMBER: You mentioned global warming and climatic change. Are you someone who thinks there is climatic change or global warming—maybe not in this instance but in general?

Mr SHIPARD: There may be climate change and global warming coming but I think it is still coming. I don't think that we are really seeing the effects in what has been related back to our water issues. These water issues I have seen coming since probably the fifties and sixties because there were waterholes in the creek that went to the weir (in the earlier days of my life) that were three and four foot deep. Those waterholes have all gone, so where have they gone?

I mean, things must have changed in some form. I know there are countless things that have changed since the 1950s with rabbit plagues and grasshopper plagues that would have bared the country right out and run a lot of water. Once water starts running that run of water will happen for years until there is appropriate vegetation back. So, things have changed over the years, no doubt, but there was obviously a lot more water there than there is these days for them to have ever gone to the trouble of building a weir wall across the creek like they did back in the 1900 era.

766 The PRESIDING MEMBER: You have referred to other elements that have affected the supply of water. Do you want to say what they think they are, in your view?

Mr SHIPARD: I think that I would have to say that the things that I have done, I have tried to do either from guidance or perhaps, in some cases, I have even been ahead of things that have been recommended by Landcare and Native Veg and all those sorts of things. But even having gone down those paths, I wonder whether what we do with the country has bigger changes than we really realise when we are taking on these issues.

I have noted the change that has been made to land simply by putting a contour bank across a paddock. The paddock might be able to dry out in five or six hours after a rain if there is no contour bank; if you put a contour bank across it, it might take three days before you can get on the land, which is quite a difference. If it is holding moisture back to that extent, it's there, it's then used by a crop. Once it's been used by a crop, it's not travelling under the ground into the watertable is it? Having talked about all of this, the water was still under the ground in the wells—that wasn't a problem—but there was change noted in the surface water, and I think that's the first thing we have to take notice of.

The actual water meetings that were held for EP for the water security, there was a bunch of people in our area who were screaming out for reticulated water, and they were basically saying what I covered here about the changes and where has our water gone. But I think that probably because it seems to be the flavour of the time to talk about global warning, etc, perhaps people in better areas haven't seen this coming like perhaps we have in a slightly drier area.

767 The Hon. G.A. KANDELAARS: Coming back to your map, the green area that you have marked on this map is essentially the weir's capture area.

Mr SHIPARD: Yes.

768 The Hon. G.A. KANDELAARS: What significant changes have occurred over the time in terms of your farming practices that you think might have had an impact in regeneration of groundwater, etc., because that seems to be the issue at point: how much land clearance took place and what type of farming practices.

Mr SHIPARD: In the early days, there was country burnt before Dad's time, as in cold burning. That was a practice which was experienced in the early days, which would have created run-off and also reduced the heavier vegetation of timber-type cover in the country. Dad made the statement in the 1970s that there was no she-oak left in the country; it had had it. It had deteriorated quite considerably in the 20 years he had been there, and I think that was a follow-on of quite a few things that had happened after the burn-offs, the cold burns. There had been a couple of lightening strikes, which had amounted to 1,000 acres being burnt out in that time.

In the late 1970s, we re-fenced the farm. The re-fencing project meant that we shut off some of the hills country and slowly fenced ahead of the sheep, which meant that I destocked. Over that period the starting up of the new program of fencing and everything changed things quite

considerably. There is a massive regeneration of she-oak; that would have probably cut back the watertable quite a bit, I reckon. Over the whole farm, during my life, there has been about 1,000 acres of land cleared that wasn't cleared in the early days because it was predominantly a grazing property. It has meant that the better part of the farm has ended up running the total number of stock that originally was run over the whole farm. That means that the productivity was increased. That means that there must have been an increase in feed. You didn't increase it if you didn't have extra feed. So the usage of water has changed. That's my point: that it has changed.

I was looking at some figures and thinking about things and, over a period of years, the usage for cropping has been probably something of the order of, say, half to three-quarters of a bag per acre per inch of rain. It rises a little bit higher if you get a wet season following a dry area, where you've got disease control and everything underhand. You wouldn't get up to a bag an acre. But a couple of years ago—and I am out of farming now—I heard rumours that guys were reaping up to 27 bags an acre off 16 inches of rain. That's better than a bag and a half an acre. So, if that sort of usage of the water is starting to happen, it means that the farming community—without trying to condemn what farmers are doing—have become a lot more efficient with their water use.

769 The Hon. G.A. KANDELAARS: One would have thought some of the modern farming practices actually conserve water. Less tillage, etc., tends to mean that the water is held in the soil a bit better than it used to be.

Mr SHIPARD: But then it's there to use and, if it's used, it's used.

770 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Can I just ask you a question about your submission? You talk about the contamination from septic tanks, and I think you make a comment about the EPA working at cross purposes. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr SHIPARD: I am concerned about that. I think that's been taken out of text a little bit. That's in the summary, isn't it?

771 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Yes.

Mr SHIPARD: The CWMS is being put to us as a necessity for the betterment of our harbour, to try and stop contamination from underground in our harbour. I am a bit concerned that, if that's a necessity, it needs to be proven to us because the oyster growers have said that they've had water tests done and there is no real sign of contamination there. I am concerned that I don't really want to see CWMS go ahead as it has been proposed to us because, if it goes ahead as proposed, I believe that there's going to be quite a considerable waste of water, particularly considering that there is a lot of water already being treated through private units in our town. If those private units are closed down and the water is from those and roughly the same figure is going to be taken to water the public areas, then the water will need to be replaced anyway. So we're not really gaining anything from a water point of view there.

We've also got an unknown quantity of water being used under the ground by trees, etc., from the trench systems that are there too. The contamination was purely something that the EPA apparently has put up to our council as an argument, and the ratepayers asked for an environmental impact study to prove that there is a necessity to go down that path. There's very mixed feelings as to whether it should go ahead as it's been proposed or not, or even whether maybe private treatment units would be the option.

772 The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: Just following on from your last answer, did the EPA's concerns particularly relate to the unique nature of Franklin Harbor itself? Is that the reason?

Mr SHIPARD: I am of the belief that it is a generalisation, the way that it's been presented to us, that coastal areas need to go over to a common system. That's what I think is the situation. There is nothing being related to Cowell specific, I don't think. One of my concerns is that Salt Creek catchment, which is the causeway on the north side of the town—that catchment is 219,500 hectares; one of the biggest water catchments on Eyre Peninsula.

That only runs periodically on the surface anyway, it is not a common thing—probably a once in 10 year average—but if that water quality is poor (and it has been identified as poor; I mention that in the submission), if that floods and it comes into that catchment on the northern side of the causeway, it would be like a bath full of silt; it settles and it sits there, and the contaminants would be there for every tide or movement then for months afterwards in the event of a flood. To me, there is no consideration for factors like that within the argument of the septic

being the problem. What is our problem, if we need to look after the harbour, we need to look after it for the right reasons.

773 The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: I suppose my point relates to that, in that Franklin Harbor is quite different—

Mr SHIPARD: Yes.

774 The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: —as a coastal arm of the gulf, to any other area along the Eyre Peninsula coast.

Mr SHIPARD: That is the point I am trying to get over, and there are several others of us within our council area that have been questioning the same things. We are very concerned that, if it is going to be, it has got to be for the right reasons. There is no point in doing this at an expense to our water and then finding out it is all the wrong move, is there?

775 The PRESIDING MEMBER: I notice in your submission, Mr Shipard, that you have a very strong view about River Murray water. I am just wondering whether you would like to expand on that.

Mr SHIPARD: I believe that it was a water system that had problems, and I really think that that had not been identified before it was ever started to bring it to Eyre Peninsula. It should never have come to Eyre Peninsula. The livelihood for the people along the Murray and the people who were already using that water was at jeopardy before we started using it; therefore, I think that, really, somehow, there should have been more done to find an alternative to that.

776 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Can I assure you again that the committee has not come to any conclusion about this inquiry at this stage; we are trying to particularly speak to locals about what their views are, and any information that they want to bring forward. I would just like to commend you on your excellent submission, and also what you have presented today. Thank you very much.

777 The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: Madam Chair, I would like to compliment Mr Shipard on the quality of his handwriting; I reckon that's terrific.

Mr SHIPARD: My wife periodically tells me it's scribble, but I did take a bit of extra time to try and make it readable. I don't have a computer to present it as typed.

778 The Hon. J.S.L. DAWKINS: You've done a very good job with that.

779 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Thank you very much. We appreciate your time.

Mr SHIPARD: Thanks very much. I can assure you that if we can see some sort of a result for this, we would consider it worth our effort, because it is something that has been of concern to me for quite some time. As I say, having a self-watered farm, we have relied on our own water resources, and when we moved into the town, we suddenly had water restrictions within about nine months. I thought, 'My God, what did we let ourselves into?'

780 The PRESIDING MEMBER: That seems very unfair.

Mr SHIPARD: We are no better off and worrying about keeping our own water up. So, yes, it has been quite an issue to look at our water future.

781 The PRESIDING MEMBER: Yes, certainly; thank you very much.

THE WITNESS WITHDREW