

**GROUNDWATER (BORDER AGREEMENT) (AMENDING
AGREEMENT) AMENDMENT BILL**

22.06.06

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: This bill seeks to approve and ratify an amendment to the Border Groundwater Agreement between Victoria and South Australia that has already been signed off by the Governments of each State. The latter agreement, often referred to as the 'Principal Agreement' was executed in 1985 and provided for the coordinated management of groundwater resources in the vicinity of the border between South Australia and Victoria.

The Principal Agreement is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, in most areas adjacent to the Victorian and South Australian border, groundwater is the only reliable water source. Thus, it is crucial for many primary producers. The Principal Agreement has ensured that the available groundwater resources have been shared equitably between the two States.

The bill contains many, what I would call, 'administrative provisions' amending management prescriptions in respect of the two aquifer systems, namely, the tertiary confined sand aquifer and the tertiary limestone aquifer. It also provides for a tidy up of wording and references to other legislation.

The Government states that the Principal Agreement has operated in a fair and functional manner over the past 20 years. The Government also states that the Principal Agreement has provided a framework for development of long term strategies for the

protection and sustainable harvesting of groundwater resources. The new powers of review given to the Committee under the Act will go some way to ensuring proper use of this natural resource. However, I have some concerns about the reality of the situation in light of the comments made by the Hon Sandra Kanck regarding the decrease in groundwater resource levels and the increase in salinity levels over time. On the final analysis, I concur with the Hon Sandra Kanck's conclusion that this appears to be a step in the right direction. I just hope that this Government will continue to make efforts to protect and conserve our natural resources over the long haul.

For the above reasons, I am supportive of the second reading of the Bill.