



Vics want our help to take Murray water

CARA JENKIN
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

THE Victorian Government wants South Australian support to override amendments to a Bill which would stop Melbourne taking water from the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Senate yesterday passed the Water Amendment Bill, which includes amendments to block the construction of a pipeline to supply water from the basin to Melbourne.

It also includes amendments for cities outside the basin to reduce their take of water from the system over time.

Melbourne now does not source water from the basin but the proposed pipeline would take 75 gegalitres of water each year. It is about half what Adelaide takes from the River Murray in dry years.

A member of the Victorian Premier's media unit contacted *The Advertiser* on Wednesday to suggest more SA media coverage on the consequences of the amendments.

He suggested South Australians should be made aware that

if the Bill's amendments were passed, Adelaide would have to be weaned off the River Murray. But if the amendments were defeated, the Victorian Government would be able to build the pipeline.

The Victorian Government last year also stalled the Federal

“It would be the first time the Victorian Government has tried to feign interest in South Australia's water supply.

- SENATOR SIMON BIRMINGHAM

Government takeover of management of the Murray-Darling Basin. Liberal senators Mary Jo Fisher and Simon Birmingham said the amendments aimed to block the pipeline to increase water security for all users.

Senator Birmingham said most South Australians wanted Adelaide's reliance on the river to be reduced.

“It would be the first time the Victorian Government has tried to feign interests in South Australia's water supply,” he said.

Senator Fisher said SA needed to take the lead before other states could follow.

“The amendment is to, over time, reduce reliance on the Murray by those who have more choice in their access to water, like a capital city like Adelaide, like a capital city like Melbourne,” she said.

Independent Senator Nick Xenophon said “it doesn't make sense” for more water to be taken out of a system which was already struggling to survive.

Federal Water Minister Penny Wong said the Government would reject the amendments when the Bill returned to the Lower House next week.

“Everybody agrees we should be investing in new water supplies that don't rely on rainfall and the Murray... but that doesn't mean you turn off the tap to Adelaide.” she said.