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Title:
Press statement - Chowilla (Mr Corcoran)

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PRESS STATEMENT: 21. 2. 69.

FROM: THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (MR. CORCORAN).

SUBJECT: CHOWILLA.

The LCL Government was failing to recognise SA's needs above those of NSW and Victoria if it did not insist on the construction of the Chowilla Dam, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Corcoran) said during a public meeting in Berri tonight.

Mr. Corcoran said that in 1956 waters from the Tooma River had been diverted from the Murray into the Snowys.

This had resulted in a loss to SA, and because of this Sir Thomas Playford had taken steps to see that SA received some form of recognition and compensation.

In 1963 the Federal Government, and the Governments of SA, NSW and Victoria had held negotiations which resulted in the ratification of the agreement providing SA with Chowilla.

The financial aspect of this deal had been limited to \$30m.

"However, when a cost estimate had been made, the amount rose to \$43m.," Mr. Corcoran said.

"The lowest tender received was \$68m."

Mr. Corcoran said that following this, the Federal Government had called for an investigation into Chowilla.

"If the Labor Government had taken the matter to arbitration at that time, the arbitrator would have called for information that only an investigation could have provided.

"Because of this the Government had no other choice but to defer the matter while the investigation was conducted."

Mr. Corcoran said that at that time it had been confidently felt that any intensive investigation would only assist in concreting the feasibility and need for Chowilla.

"And the Government was right," he said.

"The recently released report shows that no other water storage can do for SA what Chowilla can."

"And now, despite the report which the River Murray Commission's Technical Committee has made, the Premier (Mr. Hall) is supporting Dartmouth, a water storage in Victoria.

"Yet in 1967 he told the House of Assembly that to build a water storage in a State other than SA was not to do justice to ourselves. "It is quite clear that he is not recognising SA's needs above those of NSW and Victoria."

Mr. Corcoran said that Dartmouth would not protect SA from the salinity problem as well as Chowilla.

He said that SA has taken steps to control irrigation along the Murray, and to prevent seepages back into it that could lead to salinity.

"The other two States have done nothing about this, and because of their lack of thinking, you, the citrus growers and market gardeners, are suffering.

"With Chowilla SA would have had about \$60m. injected into its depressed economy, but now we will get nothing.

Mr. Corcoran said that the cost of Dartmouth had been placed at about \$57m., although a detailed estimate had not yet been made.

"This means that a final price could well be far more than the final estimate for Chowilla."

"Mr. Hall says he will fight for an annual allotment of 1.5m. acre feet from the Murray.

"But if the Federal Government, NSW and Victoria have not kept their word about Chowilla, how can he place any value on another deal.

"And even if he gets a promise that they assure will be kept, can he with any certainty say that this additional water will be available in a dry year?

"Of course he can't.

"If SA is to develop and expand, it needs a decent, reliable water storage which can provide quality as well as quantity.

"Chowilla could have given both, but instead Mr. Hall is supporting a storage that will take eight years to construct and fill."