



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Corio Electorate: Ovoid Sewer
Aqueduct over Barwon River**

SPEECH

Tuesday, 2 June 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Marles, Richard, MP

Source House
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Mr MARLES (Corio) (16:26): Tucked in behind the industrial precinct of Breakwater in my electorate is a remarkable structure, the Ovoid Sewer Aqueduct over Barwon River. This is a structure which was commissioned by the Geelong Waterworks and Sewerage Trust. It was built by Edward Giles Stone and his partner, Ernest Siddeley. It is 756 metres long, consisting of a series of trusses which cantilever from 14 concrete corniced piers. It was built between 1913 and 1915, which means that this year is the centenary of the construction of the Barwon ovoid sewer aqueduct. It is a piece of construction on an absolutely grand scale.

This was a design that was inspired by the Firth of Forth Bridge in Scotland, which had been constructed about 25 years before. It was an early and innovative use of reinforced concrete, but it was done on a grand scale, using the Considere system. Dr Miles Lewis, an associate professor of architecture at Melbourne uni, once stated:

The aqueduct is internationally significant and was one of the most extraordinary engineering structures in Australia.

It is structure which is very much based on innovation, on a grand scale. It comes from an innovative city and it is in the tradition of James Harrison. It is hardly viewed by anybody. You can see it as you as a drive on the Barwon Heads Road down to Barwon Heads.

In 1992, the aqueduct was decommissioned, and since then it has fallen into a state of disrepair, which is tragic in its own way. We are told—and I think this is right—that it would cost millions of dollars to restore it. It is a sewer pipe, which is obviously no longer used, and there is a walking path on top of it. But there is now the enduring question of what to do with this incredible structure.

A start, in my view, in this the centenary of the structure, would be to make a walking track along the stretch of land on the northern side of the Barwon River—which is managed by the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority—to the left of the aqueduct itself. Interpretive signs could be placed along that trail so that people get a sense of what it is. The more people who see it, the greater the chance that we can reimagine a fantastic future for it.