

DROUGHT RELIEF — RURAL WATER COUNCIL

Statement by Minister for Water

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [12.20 pm]: I rise to inform the house of my recent visit to Northam with two great representatives of the Agricultural Region, Hon Darren West and Hon Laurie Graham. I attended the Rural Water Council meeting and met with fourteen local councils about their concerns for water supplies as their communities feel the effects of climate change, with little or no rainfall in recent months. They also voiced their concern at the Prime Minister and federal Minister Littleproud for their lack of consultation and unclear grant criteria, which saw many Western Australian shires miss out on receiving much-needed relief through the Drought Communities Programme. We then headed out to the state government desalination small-scale trial at Muresk that converts brackish groundwater into water that can be used for stock and could supplement on-farm water supplies. The Water Corporation has been working with Murdoch University and the Wheatbelt Development Commission to investigate innovations to better use the wheatbelt's water resources, including brackish groundwater.

Advances in small-scale desalination, water treatment and energy systems have added to the options available for remote and regional water supply. As prices of innovative technology drop and drivers of change intensify, a range of new water treatment applications have the potential to be adopted. Over the next four years, Water Corporation in conjunction with its partners will research the viability of on-farm desalination treatment technologies to enable farms to be more drought resilient.

With the effects of climate change only intensifying, the McGowan government is focused on looking at new technologies that will help reduce emissions and allow us to adapt to our changing environment.