

WATERWAYS — REGIONAL ESTUARY INVESTMENT

**197. Dr K.D. HAMES to the Minister for Water:**

Yesterday the state government announced a \$20 million investment in regional estuaries, including the Peel–Harvey estuary. Can the minister please inform the house how this funding will help improve the health of regional estuaries?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:**

I thank the member for the question. It was a fantastic day yesterday in the Peel with my cabinet colleagues and local members.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Are you finished, member for Girrawheen? I call you to order for the first time.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** That is fine. If you want me to call you for the second time, keep it up.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Members might be interested to know that about 80 per cent of Western Australia's population lives around or near our Western Australian estuaries and currently six are classified as being at the highest risk.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the second time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It is the member's time she is wasting. I am happy to stand up all day and talk about this.

**The SPEAKER:** Through the Chair!

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There will be a focus on six estuaries in the south west that are most at risk, and that is a result of pressures of urbanisation, intensive agriculture, increased historical land use over a long period and, of course, our drying climate, which has an impact on the waterways. The six that we will focus on are the Peel–Harvey estuary, with \$6 million; Leschenault Estuary around Bunbury and the catchment, with \$7.5 million; Hardy Inlet around Augusta, with \$2 million; Wilson Inlet, with \$2 million; Oyster Harbour around Albany, with \$2 million; and the Vasse and Wonnerup estuaries. This is in addition to the \$15 million that we have already invested in the Vasse–Wonnerup system. When these systems start to fail, we start to see very poor outcomes for plant life and we start to see major fish kills, which is one of the reasons that the strategy was put in place for the Vasse–Wonnerup. We now have all the stakeholders down there sitting around the table and working together to deliver a better outcome for that community.

The City of Mandurah told me that it estimates that around \$1 billion of economic development is associated with the estuary in and around the Peel–Harvey. Aside from the environmental benefits, the economic benefits are vital to the regions and to the state. For this reason, the program will work collaboratively. We have done a lot of work already in this space. The Peel–Harvey Catchment Council, the other catchment councils and the natural resource management groups right across the region will work in partnership with landholders, farmers and other industry groups to leverage this \$20 million to deliver a better outcome. We will see an increase in regional capacity through our on-ground management. There will be some sustainable agriculture outcomes. We will be doing some soil testing and best practice dairy effluent management with our farmers. There will be improvements in the drainage systems that work through those catchment areas and we will look at innovative remediation projects. We are looking at new technologies to treat and reduce the nutrients and improve the soils in those regions. For the long term, we will also have additional modelling and science so that we can look at the —

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Wind it up, please.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** Sorry, Mr Speaker, but there is a lot of interjection from over there and this is an important issue.

**The SPEAKER:** I want you to wind it up now, please.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** There are excellent partnerships. It was well received on the ground yesterday by everyone in the local community. It was really disappointing that there was opposition from those on that side of the house.

**Ms M.M. Quirk** interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Girrawheen, I call you to order for the third time.

**Ms M.J. DAVIES:** It was very disappointing to see that the spokespeople for water and conservation were critical of this program. I can tell members that it was very well received on the ground and they are looking forward to getting on with business.