

CLIMATE CHANGE — RAINFALL

71. Ms E.J. KELSIE to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the impacts that climate change is having on Western Australian farmers through reduced rainfall.

- (1) Can the minister update the house on how the McGowan Labor government is supporting farmers in dealing with the challenges caused by climate change?
- (2) Can the minister advise the house on how the federal government can support these efforts?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for her question. It is absolute fantastic to have her in the house, and I congratulate her on her victory in Warren–Blackwood.

Despite the recent rains—we have had some pretty good rain in the last couple of weeks—the impacts of climate change in Western Australia are stark. The south west of Western Australia is one of the places on the planet most impacted upon by declining rainfall due to climate change. That has had significant consequences in Western Australia. Since 2019, we have in our first term of government dealt with an unprecedented 12 water deficiency declarations. There has only ever previously been two; we currently have 12 in place. That requires us to cart water to farmers so that they can provide water to their stock. That comes at significant cost and significant difficulty and stress for the farmers involved.

In addition to doing that, in 2019–20 we spent \$1.5 million on 37 community water projects to upgrade dams across the great southern and the wheatbelt so that non-potable supplies were available to the farming community, notwithstanding the declining rainfall.

But we are not resting on our laurels. In February this year, just before the election, we announced a project to upgrade 70 agricultural area dams across the great southern and the wheatbelt. That is a \$7.3 million project—the biggest investment of its type in that area in decades. Seventy dams will be upgraded to provide non-potable supplies to farmers who are facing difficulties. The state government will provide \$3.65 million for that project—again, an unprecedented amount of investment from a state government. For the other 50 per cent of that project, we have made an application to the commonwealth government's National Water Grid Authority. Today is federal budget day; we hope to get good news from the federal government that it is going to support our project through the federal budget and the National Water Grid Authority. Members will be aware that much of the spending by the commonwealth government on water infrastructure has been centred on the east coast. Something like \$12 billion has been spent, most of it on the Murray–Darling Basin. Only two per cent of that has been spent on Western Australian projects.

We on this side of the house have a strong record of taking action on climate change and supporting farmers when they need it. We have put up 50 per cent of the money for this new project of 70 dam upgrades across the great southern and the wheatbelt; we are asking for some of the commonwealth government's water infrastructure funding to flow to WA. Let us see what it says in tonight's budget.