

WATERWISE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

399. Hon MATT BENSON-LIDHOLM to the minister representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to the “Perth–Peel regional water plan 2010–2030”, and in particular section 4.3, headed “Small-scale alternative supplies”, which states that in Perth, only 7.2 per cent of all households use rainwater tanks, compared with 19 per cent of all Australian households, and that if the dissemination of such tanks was encouraged, up to 11.6 gegalitres of water could be saved each year. Given this clear evidence of the benefits of encouraging water savings in the home, will the minister now accept that the cancellation of the highly successful and nationally awarded Waterwise subsidy program was wrong, and reintroduce this program to encourage householders to install rainwater tanks, bores and the like; and, if not, why not?

Hon HELEN MORTON replied:

I thank the honourable member for some notice of the question. The Minister for Water has provided the following advice —

The Waterwise rebate program concluded on 30 June 2009, after granting rebates to over 351 000 households at a cost of \$44.7 million, and saving an estimated 85 billion litres of water. The rebate program was successful in raising awareness of the need to improve water efficiency and providing some incentive to invest in a range of water saving initiatives, including rainwater tanks. In April 2009, the Water Corporation and the Department of Water jointly published a report into the cost effectiveness of rainwater tanks for Perth. The report concluded that the cost of rainwater tanks varies considerably, with roof area, plumbing for internal use and rainfall pattern being the major variables. In Perth, the average cost per kilolitre is estimated at between \$4 and \$17, depending on these variables. This makes rainwater tanks more expensive in Perth than other water supply and demand alternatives. Accordingly, the current focus on reducing water use in Perth is through programs such as the recent highly successful Target 60 campaign, and a major showerhead exchange program currently underway. The government does not plan to introduce statewide rebates for rainwater tanks. In some parts of the state, rainwater tanks are a cost effective alternative to traditional water supply options. In the lower Great Southern region, for example, the Water Corporation is funding a Rainwater Reward program, with up to \$1 000 available for eligible rainwater tank installations.