

WATER — PERTH AND INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM — DROUGHTPROOFING

382. Mr D.J. KELLY to the Minister for Water:

I refer the minister to claims she made in this house that the Barnett government has “droughtproofed Perth and the interconnected system” and to her answer yesterday to a question on notice in which she declined to give any supportive evidence of this claim.

- (1) Does she accept that her “I have droughtproofed Perth” statement was an irresponsible claim that is not supported by any scientific assessment of Perth’s future and current water needs?
- (2) Is she not undoing the hard work and millions of dollars spent by successive governments on community education campaigns by sending the wrong message to customers that our water supply problems are over?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for the question. I was not expecting to get a dorothy dixer from that side of the house, but thank you for letting me give the answer again! It does not matter how many times the member asks me, I will say the same thing. This state government and previous state governments have made significant investments to make sure that when we turn on a tap in Western Australia, water comes out. I would accept the member’s argument if there was a crisis in Western Australia, but I do not have one—there is not one. We have invested in two desalination plants. We have gone to full-scale production on a groundwater replenishment scheme, so we have increased our recycling. We are working with communities to increase their recycling. We have made significant investments at a time when we have had a drying climate and a significant population growth, and we matched the expenditure required to make sure we did not have a crisis in Western Australia. I am very confident, barring the fact that we have a five or 10-year, once-in-a-lifetime drought, that we have made the appropriate investment to give confidence to the people of Western Australia that when they turn on a tap, water will come out.