

NATIONAL WATER WEEK

Statement by Minister for Water

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [12.56 pm]: This week is National Water Week—an annual event coordinated by the Australian Water Association to build awareness and understanding of water issues across the country. The theme of Water Week for 2014 is “Water sources: There are more than you think”. It is very timely that this morning I turned the sod on the advanced water recycling plant in Craigie for our groundwater replenishment scheme. The first rig has been mobilised to drill two monitoring and recharge bores into the Leederville aquifer at Water Corporation’s Craigie site. This follows on from the construction of a 754-metre deep bore into the Yarragadee aquifer, which will allow the recharge of 3.5 billion litres of recycled water a year. In our drying climate, groundwater replenishment provides a secure, rainfall-independent water source that has the potential to supply up to 20 per cent of Perth’s future drinking water needs by 2060. Western Australia is regarded as a leading practitioner of this technology that will see 14 billion litres of recycled water, treated to drinking water standards, recharged into existing groundwater supplies each year. The full-scale plant is scheduled for completion in late 2016, and could be expanded to 28 billion litres capacity over several years as demand increases. This means that the Perth metropolitan area now has a diverse range of water sources. We obviously still have our dams, which capture and store water when it rains. We have our two desalination plants and our existing groundwater supplies and we are now moving into recycling water to replenish our groundwater.

Our next focus is to ensure that regional WA has an increased security of water supply. This is a bit more challenging, with a number of regional towns being reliant on one water source or water being piped or carted long distances. However, we have started this work and I have spoken in this place previously about the Warren–Blackwood regional water supply scheme and the Margaret River scheme, which will provide a mix of groundwater and surface water to parts of the south west.

Royalties for regions is funding a range of groundwater investigations across the state, which are proving up new water resources. We are also looking at the existing water assets we have in regional areas to make sure that we are making the best use of the infrastructure we have available. Bringing small disused dams back into service and enhancing our existing wastewater recycling schemes are some of the things we can do now to make a real difference to our regional communities. We live in one of the driest parts of the world and ensuring we have a diverse range of water sources is helping to secure the water supplies as our climate continues to change.