

WATER LICENSING FEES

4772. Hon Nigel Hallett to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Water Resources

On 19 April 2007, the Department of Water (DoW) provided information to a meeting in Manjimup of the statutory Warren Water Management Area Advisory Committee, showing that under proposed water licence fees applying from July 2007, of the 428 licences in the Manjimup and Pemberton area, eight licences or 1.9 per cent will be subject to a \$200 annual fee and 190 licences or 44.4 percent will be subject to a \$325 annual fee.

Six days later on 25 April 2007, the DoW ran an advertisement on page nine of the *Manjimup-Bridgetown Times* headed 'Water Licensing Administration Fees' stating – 'The change means 82 percent of the 13 000 existing licensees will pay an annual fee of less than \$325.'

Noting the only fee of less than \$325 in the proposed fees is \$200; this statement suggests 82 percent of 13,000 existing licensees will pay an annual fee of \$200. I ask -

- (1) Is the Minister for Water Resources and the DoW aware of the concern farmers in the Manjimup and Pemberton area have expressed in regard to the water licence fees to be introduced from July 2007?
- (2) Did the DoW lodge the advertisement with the *Manjimup-Bridgetown Times* to address what it perceived as the expressed concern of people in the Manjimup and Pemberton area in regard to water licence fees?
- (3) With what other newspapers did the DoW lodge the same advertisement implying 82 percent of 13 000 existing licensees will pay an annual fee of \$200, and on what dates were those advertisements published?
- (4) Recognising that only 1.9 percent of water licence holders in the Manjimup and Pemberton area will be subject to \$200 licence fees, does the Minister for Water Resources acknowledge the advertisement may have misled and deceived readers in the Manjimup and Pemberton area?
- (5) Will the Minister confirm that table seven page 35 draft Blueprint for Water Reform July 2006 shows 10940 of a total 18674 water licences in Western Australia in the less than 5000 kilolitres class and now \$200 fee class; which is 58 percent not 82 percent subject to \$200 fees?
- (6) What action will be taken by the Minister for Water Resources and the DoW to correct misleading advertising on water licence administration fees?

Hon KIM CHANCE replied:

- (1) I am aware that some farmers in the Manjimup and Pemberton area have expressed concerns regarding the water licensing administration fee. The fee only applies to a water licence and there are many farm dams in this area that will not be subjected to the fee as they do not require a licence. The Department of Water has, and continues, to provide advice on this issue and information to licence holders on how the fee will affect them. The information provided to all licensees, and available from the Department of Water's website, clearly shows the number and percentage of licences for each of the fees in the schedule.
- (2) The schedule of fees from which licence holders could determine their fee was advertised in the *Manjimup-Bridgetown Times* on 25 April 2007 and subsequently on 9 May 2007 with some minor corrections
- (3) The advertisement was run in the:
 - Wanneroo Times on 24 April 2007 and 8 May 2007
 - Stirling Times on 24 April 2007 and 8 May 2007
 - North Coast Times on 24 April 2007 and 8 May 2007
 - Joondalup Community Newspapers on 26 April 2007 and 10 May 2007
 - South West Times on 26 April 2007 and 10 May 2007
 - Bullsbrook Gingin Advocate on 24 April 2007 and 8 May 2007
- (4) The information in the advertised schedule of fees related to the State as a whole and there was no deliberate intent to mislead readers.
- (5) Subsequent to the draft Blueprint for Water Reform, it was determined that approximately 13,540 licences will be subject to the water licence administration. Approximately 39% of licences will incur a fee of \$200 and 82% a fee of \$325 or less.

- (6) The advertisements were re-published incorporating Department of Water's amendments that addressed the concerns raised.