

WATER CORPORATION — STANDPIPE WATER SUPPLY — ROE ELECTORATE

142. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the fact that 80 per cent of standpipes in the Lake Grace and Kulin area were shut down at the height of summer, with no notice provided.

- (1) Does the minister endorse Water Corporation's decision, which jeopardised much-needed stock water and had animal welfare implications?
- (2) Can the minister enlighten my constituents on the infrastructure failures or staff resourcing issues that led to this appalling situation?
- (3) Will the minister direct the Water Corporation to start maintaining water catchments and the four dams around Lake Grace to help catch water rather than filling in dams, which it is contemplating?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for that question.

- (1)–(3) If the member reads the public commentary I made around that issue at the time, he will see that I made it pretty clear that I did not think the Water Corporation gave the residents who rely on those standpipes sufficient notice. The Water Corporation—as I hope the member understands, because there has been quite a bit of discussion about this incident—shut off the standpipes because there was an unexpected spike in demand on them. That unexpected demand meant that the scheme water—the town water supplies for a number of towns in those areas—was put in jeopardy. The Water Corporation made the decision that it needed to act to close the standpipes to ensure that those towns could continue to have water flowing. If there is insufficient water, action has to be taken, and that is what it did. It made sure that those towns continued to have a reliable supply of water. Had it not done that, we could have had a situation in which households, in all sorts of circumstances, would not have had sufficient water.

Having made the decision to take that action, the Water Corporation did not give people enough warning. At the time, I commented publicly that I was not satisfied. I did not think that the Water Corporation had given people as much notice as it should have. Since then I have got the Water Corporation, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development together to make sure that as best as possible that sort of incident does not happen again. I do not criticise the Water Corporation for taking significant action, because when town water supplies are in jeopardy, action has to be taken, but it has to be done in a way so that the people who are affected and the people who rely on those standpipes are given as much notice as possible. It has been a couple of weeks since that happened and since then I have got together all the government departments to make sure that as best as humanly possible that circumstance will not be repeated.