

WATER CORPORATION — IN-HOUSE WORK

**1074. Ms L.L. BAKER to the Minister for Water:**

Do not get comfortable there, minister! I refer to the McGowan government's decision to end the Liberal Party's privatisation of a number of water services, which has seen us able to bring 170 local workers back in house at the Water Corporation.

Could the minister update the house on how bringing metropolitan water production and wastewater treatment services back into public hands will benefit the community and employees?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

I thank the member for Maylands for that question. Yes, today it was a privilege to be out at the Water Corporation's Innovation Centre in Shenton Park to announce to the workforce there that the board of the Water Corporation has decided to bring back in house work that currently is being done by the Aroona Alliance.

**The SPEAKER:** Member for Balcatta.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** Currently, the Aroona Alliance operates a bunch of Water Corporation assets in the metropolitan area—wastewater treatment plants, water treatment plants, dams and trunk mains, to name a few. About 400 staff are involved, and just over 200 of them are already Water Corporation employees, but 170 of them are currently employed by a private entity. The Water Corporation board has decided to bring all that work back in house, which will mean that those 170 workers currently employed by the private sector will become directly employed by the Water Corporation. When that announcement was made today, the workforce was absolutely ecstatic. Long-term employees of the Water Corporation were telling their stories. One guy who came to see me had been doing essentially the same job for 20 years. He had had five different names on his shirt. He was pleased that a Labor government had made the decision to reverse the privatisation of these services, which began back in 1996 under the Court Liberal government. We got the same story over and over again. People who were doing the same or similar job, every few years had the potential to have their working lives disrupted by the next contractor or the next change of structure. From the staff's point of view, the announcement was very well received. From the board's point of view, it was absolutely the right thing to do. The new chief executive officer of the Water Corporation, Pat Donovan, explained in some detail the process that the board went through to reach the decision to insource those services. A comprehensive business case was conducted that considered all the options, including maintaining the current structure, right through to insourcing. When the board looked at it, it made the decision that it was the best thing for the business as well as the staff to bring that work back in house. That follows a similar decision of the board in August to bring back in house the Perth Region Alliance contract. About 250 people will become direct employees of the Water Corporation.

On this side of the house, we have a view that water is an essential service and that the public expects and is most comfortable with these services being provided by direct employees of the Water Corporation. We are proud of the job security for those staff that will come as a result of this decision and we are pleased that in the board's view this is the best thing for the business. I know that members opposite do not like these sorts of decisions. As much as it is written all over their faces, they do not like the public sector and especially the way the Water Corporation has done its business. When members opposite were in government, they sold off the construction division of the Water Corporation. It turned out to be an absolute disaster for those staff. They privatised the water treatment plant at Mundaring and signed a 35-year contract. That was the way members opposite approached this essential service. I wish members opposite could have been at the meeting today to hear stories from the staff and to listen to the new CEO of the Water Corporation talk about the meticulous process it went through. We on this side of the house believe that the provision of water is an essential service and, consistent with the views of most Western Australians, we believe those services are best placed in public hands.