

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BILL — DRAFTING

Statement by Minister for Water

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Water) [9.08 am]: I rise to share with the house the good news for those who are interested in modernising the state's water legislation. This month the government announced the go-ahead for the drafting of the Water Resources Management Bill, which will replace six acts with one act to create water resources legislation that is simpler to understand and easier to administer.

In 2012, the government updated laws governing water, sewerage and drainage services by creating the Water Services Act 2012. This legislation is successfully being used throughout the state and has led to better protection for customers, a reduction in red tape through streamlined licensing and the granting of exemptions when it is in the public interest and not at the expense of public health. One of those exemptions was an innovative turnkey technology project that produces power and desalinated water from wave energy to supply the Department of Defence. Such innovative sources of water need to be encouraged because they are becoming increasingly important for the sustainable development for all people, which is the theme of this year's United Nations' World Water Day on 22 March.

The Water Resources Management Bill is necessary because we require legislation that responds to the needs of today's water users and meets challenges that were not evident when our laws were developed, some of which were developed more than 100 years ago. The water resource management reforms will provide new tools to manage increased demands on high-use water resources and limited supply and adapt to the effects of climate change. These will include water allocations that can easily be adjusted to respond to seasonal variations in water availability and the use of market mechanisms to allocate water when competition arises. They will build on the world-leading work we have done in water science and groundwater modelling and allocation and in adopting climate-resilient public water supply technology, such as desalination and groundwater recharge. This work will leave us in a better position than other parts of the world to address modern water challenges and will continue to provide confidence in Western Australia as a place to live and invest. I am confident that we are well on our way to delivering a new framework that will see the state through another 100 years of effective water resource management.