

SEPTIC TANK EFFLUENT DISPOSAL SCHEME — BRUCE ROCK

755. Ms J.J. SHAW to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the Bruce Rock septic tank effluent disposal scheme, which hopefully my electorate is upwind from.

- (1) Can the minister advise the house who was responsible for conceiving the scheme, and what impact has it had on the people of Bruce Rock?
- (2) Can the minister outline to the house what action the McGowan Labor government is taking to support this community?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

- (1)–(2) I thank the member for Swan Hills for the question and for her deep interest in the issue of effluent. This question gives me the opportunity to talk about some of the financial mismanagement wrought on the state by members opposite when they were in government and the impact that they have had on the people of Bruce Rock. We all know that infill sewerage can be quite popular in electorates, but it is just not feasible in some small regional towns. The previous government, led by the then Minister for Water, now the Leader of the Opposition, came up with what are called STED schemes, which was referred to in the member's question, which require residents to maintain their septic tank and then builds a system whereby the overflow is taken away by pipes and treated elsewhere. Instead of residents being able to get rid of their septic tank, they are left with the cost of the septic tank plus the cost of the scheme.

The member for Central Wheatbelt announced the scheme for Bruce Rock. The former government also had the intent of setting them up in Boyup Brook, Kukerin and Bindoon, all Nationals WA seats. At the time it was announced in 2015, the then Minister for Water said that the Bruce Rock project would cost \$6 million. When we came to government, it was already under construction. It has now cost \$11.8 million, for about 200 residents. Believe it or not, when they began to construct the scheme in Bruce Rock, they discovered rock! That has blown out the construction cost. The former government constructed the scheme at a cost of \$11.8 million. The residents will pay \$1 200 in sewerage rates; they will still have to maintain their septic tank and, despite all that, the scheme will still require a \$600 000 per annum subsidy from the taxpayer for running the scheme.

Ms M.J. Davies: So Bruce Rock doesn't deserve underground sewerage?

Mr D.J. KELLY: The member for Central Wheatbelt said, "Don't the people of Bruce Rock deserve such a good scheme?" What do the people of Bruce Rock actually think about this scheme? They think this scheme stinks! According to my notes, one local commented to the Water Corporation that she is —

"Definitely not happy to pay an extra \$207 every two months it's a total disgrace.

Another resident said that their water rates this time last year were \$34 and now they are \$270, and as yet they have not even paid to get connected. A third resident said that he —

"Wasn't in favour of the scheme as my leach drain system is effective. Because of the rocky ground it will cost me \$12,000 to connect to the scheme, I can't afford this."

The Water Corporation has been inundated with complaints from residents because the project that the National Party thought was going to deliver it favour in places like Bruce Rock is now costing taxpayers nearly \$12 million to construct and will cost \$600 000 in annual subsidies, and people are getting enormous bills for a scheme that they do not want. What have we done about it?

Several members interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: What have we done —

Point of Order

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: Madam Speaker, I do not think the minister is encouraging interjections and yet they are persisting.

The SPEAKER: That is true. I can understand, given the reference to the member for Central Wheatbelt, that she might interject in response, and I have been tolerating that, but it is not an open invitation for every other member of the National Party to also interject.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr D.J. KELLY: We have announced that for two years, the residents of Bruce Rock will have their wastewater charges waived to give them some financial relief so that they can pay for the connection to the scheme. Beyond that, they will be stuck with a scheme for which they will have to maintain their existing septic tanks, and they will have to pay for the connection. The taxpayer will be left with a \$600 000 per year subsidy to Bruce Rock. This is exactly the sort of

mismanagement that we saw from the National Party. They thought they would win votes—clearly, at the last election they did not—and the residents of Bruce Rock and general taxpayers of Western Australia are paying the cost.

The SPEAKER: The minister for North West Central.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Sorry; member.