

YARRAGADEE AQUIFER - PUBLIC COMMENTS

109. Mr R.C. KUCERA to the Minister for Water Resources:

Before I ask the question, I acknowledge in the public gallery a number of volunteers from West Oz Welcomers who do such a great job for visitors to this state. In particular I note Murray and Helen Edinger, two of the founder members of that organisation. My question without notice is to the Minister for Water Resources.

Mr P.D. Omodei: You didn't give him the call!

The SPEAKER: I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition is hard of hearing, but I gave the member for Yokine the call. Did the Leader of the Opposition want to make a point of order?

Mr P.D. Omodei: No, I just sought the call. I am sorry, I did not think you had given him the call.

Mr R.C. KUCERA: I will start again. Given the many and varied comments being made about the south west Yarragadee aquifer, will the minister advise the house on the value these statements have in the current debate?

Mr J.C. KOBELKE replied:

I thank the member for his question. Clearly a lot of people are saying things about the south west Yarragadee aquifer and they are not all necessarily of the same view.

Point of Order

Mr M.W. TRENORDEN: Mr Speaker, does that question actually comply with the requirements of the house? From what I heard, the member is asking the minister for a point of view.

The SPEAKER: I was not taking particular note. I presume the member for Yokine asked a question of the Minister for Water Resources on the topic of the south west Yarragadee aquifer. If that is what was asked, it is within the minister's scope.

Questions without Notice Resumed

Mr J.C. KOBELKE: It is quite appropriate that we look at the facts and use them to measure the value of the comments that have been made by a range of players. The south west Yarragadee is a very important issue. It is a fantastic resource. It is estimated that there are in excess of one million gigalitres of water in the south west Yarragadee; that is one million billion litres, or about 2 000 Sydney Harbours. That is an incredible resource that is important for the environment and important for the south west. There have been scientific investigations and a review process involving a range of people over four and a half years. I have attended meetings in the south west where people have come forward and put their views. Specifically, in answer to the member's question, many of those people have expressed very important views and are concerned that the environment and the interests of water users in the south west will be protected. There is therefore a range of players. However, 70 independent experts have investigated different parts of the project as part of the review over those four and a half years. Their work has been released for peer review and people have commented on it. Experts have commented on it, people in the community have commented on it, and some people have commented on areas in which they claim to be experts but clearly have no expertise. I will refer to just one expert, and members can judge the credibility of this expert. On developing the Yarragadee, this expert said -

The Yarragadee formation will probably last 1 000 years.

A bit further on, the same person said on the record -

The Government should be . . . carefully and progressively developing the Yarragadee source . . .

That person claims to be an expert. The member for Cottesloe said that in *Hansard* on 14 August 2002.