

GNANGARA GROUNDWATER SYSTEM

Statement by Minister for Water

MR D.J. KELLY (Bassendean — Minister for Water) [2.08 pm]: On Friday, the McGowan government released a draft plan to rebalance Perth and Mandurah's precious groundwater resources that are currently at risk from the impacts of climate change and increasing use. The Gnangara groundwater system supplies up to 40 per cent of Perth's drinking water, as well as water for industry and horticulture, garden bores, and parks and other green spaces north of the Swan River. Water tables across the Gnangara mound have fallen by up to 10 metres—a 1 000 gigalitre loss of aquifer storage, equivalent to 1 000 Optus Stadiums full of water. Over half the 30 sites used to gauge the health of Gnangara's groundwater-dependent ecosystems are now breaching minimum water levels. Our wetlands are under threat and our precious groundwater supply is literally disappearing beneath our feet. The draft *Gnangara groundwater allocation plan*, developed over five years of consultation with stakeholders, will provide water users with certainty of ongoing supply and ensure the long-term environmental sustainability of the Gnangara system.

To support industries reliant on groundwater from the Gnangara system, such as horticulture, proposed reductions in water entitlements for most licensed groundwater users have been limited to just 10 per cent. A 27 per cent reduction in groundwater taken by the Water Corporation for Perth's drinking water is also proposed. The changes are proposed to come into effect from July 2028, providing water users with time to adapt.

In addition, a proposal to align the domestic garden bore sprinkler roster with the two-days-per-week sprinkler roster for scheme water users in Perth and Mandurah from 1 September 2022 is now open for public comment. Alignment of the domestic garden bore and scheme water rosters, together with the draft Gnangara plan, will save 70 gigalitres of water per year, stabilising water tables in urban areas and increasing water availability to street trees and important urban wetlands.

To assist householders and industry, the McGowan government is offering a range of programs to improve their water-use efficiency. This includes rebates on smart irrigation technology, free spring sprinkler system check-ups for householders, and a \$750 000 targeted water efficiency program for horticulturalists in north Wanneroo. The McGowan government also announced \$1.4 billion in the 2021–22 state budget for a third desalination plant, which will secure Perth's drinking water supply by providing another climate-independent drinking water source. By everyone making small changes to how we use groundwater, we can deliver environmental benefits, provide industry with clarity and certainty, and protect this precious resource for future generations.