

WATER — HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION

884. Ms M.J. DAVIES to the Minister for Water:

I refer to the spike in household water consumption on the integrated water supply scheme, as reported by the ABC on 10 October 2019.

- (1) Does the minister stand by his decision to override advice from the Water Corporation on key messaging for its latest campaign, “Climate Change is Real”?
- (2) How much has this campaign cost the taxpayer, given that the Water Corporation’s water use target has been blown by 2.6 billion litres, the exact opposite of the outcome it aimed to achieve?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

(1)–(2) I am very pleased to get a question on water.

Mr R.S. Love: You often get them.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Yes.

It is tremendous to get such a question. As the Leader of the Nationals WA would know from her time as water minister, per capita water use in this state has been steadily going down. It has been a really good trend. The Water Corporation has done a very good job over an extended period of time.

Ms M.J. Davies: They have gone up under your government.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Yes, and the Leader of the Nationals WA has picked one year.

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, you have asked a question; listen to the answer.

Mr D.J. KELLY: The Leader of the Nationals WA was Minister for Water for a reasonably short time. If she is going to try to take credit for the long-term decline in per capita water use in Western Australia, she will overstate her own capabilities. That trend began under the previous Labor government, which was the first mover on this issue. There has been one year when there was a small increase, as there was one when the Leader of the Nationals WA was Minister for Water, if my memory serves me correctly. She is completely missing the point. There has been a consistent long-term decline over a significant period, and to pick one figure shows that she really does not know what she is talking about. When she was Minister for Water and when her colleague was Minister for Water —

Ms M.J. Davies: Why don’t you just answer the question?

Mr D.J. KELLY: I am going to answer the question. You dictated to the Water Corporation —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, you have an opportunity to have a supplementary. Minister, will you talk through the Chair, please.

Mr D.J. KELLY: You dictated to the Water Corporation and to the Department of Water, for example, that they were not allowed to mention climate change. Public servants were banned —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members of the National Party!

Mr D.J. KELLY: They were banned —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: They were banned from mentioning climate change.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: National Party, as a whole, when a question is asked, as soon as the minister gets on his feet, you are giving your version. We are after the minister’s version.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Public servants were banned from mentioning —

Mr V.A. Catania: Back it up!

The SPEAKER: I will back you up and I call you to order for the first time, member for North West Central.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Public servants were banned from mentioning climate change. Water Corporation staff —

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: — were banned from talking about climate change.

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Moore, I call you to order for the first time. If you keep interjecting, I will let the minister sit down, and you can talk amongst yourselves, which you seem to enjoy.

Mr D.J. KELLY: If anybody dictated to the Water Corporation or overrode its communication messages, it was absolutely the previous government. Under this government there has been no —

Ms M.J. Davies interjected.

The SPEAKER: Leader of the National Party, I call you to order for the second time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: They are very sensitive about this issue, Mr Speaker.

Mr V.A. Catania: You are misleading the house.

The SPEAKER: Member for North West Central, I call you to order for the second time. Be careful what you say.

Mr D.J. KELLY: There has been no directive from my office about what the messages should be from the Water Corporation in its current campaign. I support what the Water Corporation is doing. As I said, there has been a long-term decline in per capita water use across the state, not just in the metropolitan area. That will continue. The reason that the National Party is so conflicted on this issue is that the government is spending \$39 million building a pipeline from Albany to Denmark to secure the water supply for the member for Warren–Blackwood’s electorate, and he is out there complaining about it. The National Party at the national level is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on water infrastructure, virtually all in the eastern states. Virtually none of it has been spent in Western Australia. Rather than standing up asking questions about Water Corporation ads, why does Leader of the National Party not do something constructive about water policy and get on to her National Party colleagues and federal Minister Littleproud, who is absolutely missing in action in Western Australia? That is what she should be doing if she wants to be constructive about water policy in Western Australia.