

WATER, WASTE WATER AND DRAINAGE SERVICES, CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

248. Mr J.P.D. EDWARDS to the Premier:

I refer the Premier to the *2004-05 Economic and Fiscal Outlook* and the reference to capital expenditure on water, waste water and drainage services and the allocation of \$356 million to provide high-quality, reliable water services across the State.

- (1) Is the Premier aware that capital works for the Water Corporation have been cut by 25 per cent and are at their lowest level under this Government, with not one additional cent of funding provided for the development of a major new water resource for Western Australia?
- (2) Is the Premier also aware that 14 000 houses in the Perth metropolitan area still remain to be sewered under the infill sewerage program, which would have been completed this year if the Government had not cut funding by nearly 50 per cent?
- (3) Will the Premier admit that after his much-vaunted water symposiums and so-called strategies, the Government has failed in this budget to invest in our water resources, our rivers and our environment by failing to restore or provide funding for these vital infrastructure projects?

Dr G.I. GALLOP replied:

- (1)-(3) Members opposite have not learnt. When they were in government, their capital works and budget programs were unsustainable. They were putting us into deficit. We have turned around that situation. Of course, when we turned it around, we had to develop a different timetable for some programs. We remain committed to the infill sewerage program, but the timetable has been altered as a result of the unsustainability of the process under the previous Government. That is point No 1. Secondly, when we came to government, Western Australia faced a serious problem; that is, the changing weather patterns and the declining run-off into the dams. This Government held a water symposium, which offered advice to the Government on these matters. I am very pleased to say that we followed up on the recommendations from that water symposium. Compared with the other States, we have managed to deal with the problems that we faced.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Order, members!

Dr G.I. GALLOP: There have been some restrictions but, compared with some States that have a complete ban on watering gardens, we have managed those restrictions very well. Our policy has been to manage the crisis that we have faced in a way that has not impacted severely on the nursery industry and has allowed people in Western Australia to maintain support for their gardens. How did we do that? We extended part of our underground program, we involved the public in the Waterwise program and there has been some expansion in the dam system in Western Australia. However, there is a big issue that we must address; that is, the next decision we must make on the water supply in Western Australia. We are currently going through that process. It is an important decision environmentally, economically and socially. We are considering the different options that are before us for a new water supply for Western Australia.

I will summarise to the member. First, the previous Government's capital works program was unsustainable and we have brought it back to a realistic level. Secondly, we have dealt with the drought crisis that we have faced in Western Australia in recent years much better than the other States have with their drought; I commend the work that has been done by government and the Water Corporation in doing that. Thirdly, there is a big decision remaining, which relates to the next new water source that Western Australia needs. We will make that decision, as we do in all of these -

Mr C.J. Barnett: You are going into the decision zone again, are you? This is the decision zone you are going into.

Dr G.I. GALLOP: The poor old Leader of the Opposition is a bit grumpy again. I wonder why. He has not got his coalition together and there is all sorts of talk about his leadership in the Liberal Party. He has not yet got his act together and he is expressing his frustrations in the Parliament.

Mr C.J. Barnett: How is your corruption inquiry going in the Labor Party? How are your false memberships going?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: I will give the Leader of the Opposition a bit of advice.

Mr C.J. Barnett: Have you found the crooks in the Labor Party yet?

Dr G.I. GALLOP: Crooks in the Labor Party - that is coming from the Liberal Party! How many former Liberal Party fundraisers are behind bars at the moment?

I say to the member for Greenough, who has taken an interest in these issues, yes, a big decision is to be made on our future water source. We will make sure that decision is made properly - economically and socially. However, I also stress that important environmental issues must be addressed, and we will be making an announcement about some of those issues relating to underground water in the near future. There are big challenges, but we are a Government capable of taking up these big challenges, unlike our predecessors.