

FARMLANDS WATER SCHEME

601. Mr R.S. LOVE to the Minister for Water:

During the winter recess the minister announced a project to address the ongoing water supply interruptions and loss of water in the farmlands water scheme. Can the minister please provide some further information on this valuable project?

Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:

I thank the member for his question and for his ongoing advocacy of water issues in his electorate. I appreciate his interest. The farmlands scheme includes around 7 800 kilometres of pipes right across the wheatbelt, and it has a history of —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the first time.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: This particular scheme has a history of leaks and breaks far above any of the other schemes in the state. This was highlighted in February last year, when the Auditor General handed down a report into the management of water pipes in Western Australia that confirmed that country regions have an annual leak and burst rate of 21 per 100 kilometres since 2010 compared with 13 in the metropolitan area. The pipes in the goldfields and the agricultural regions, the farmlands supply scheme, make up one-third of those country pipes—one-third of the scheme in regional areas—and therefore the performance of these pipes significantly impacts on our water loss across the state. Each year we lose about 2.7 billion litres of water, which is unaccounted for in that farmlands reticulation scheme, and this program aims to save around 700 million litres of water —

Mr D.J. Kelly interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Bassendean, I call you to order for the second time.

Ms M.J. DAVIES: If the member listened, he would actually learn something.

Over the next three years we are going to spend \$32 million and work with the community to invest in projects that reduce the leaks, bursts and breaks in this particular area. This will reduce the supply interruption, which has been significant across the region, and water loss. In some weeks over the last few months we have had more than 40 breaks reported each week. I get those reports into my office on a weekly basis.

More than 64 kilometres of pipeline will be replaced and 7 500 pipeline joints will be repaired through a preventive maintenance program, as opposed to going in after the break has occurred, which is far more efficient. We are also going to put smart water meters in for farmlands customers, which means that we will be able to work with customers to understand whether there are spikes in their water use, which will allow us to narrow down where there are problems in the system. These meters can save up to 250 million litres of water every year. We are working very closely with local contractors in the area to ensure that we maximise the local business content as part of the project, and over the next three years we should see a significant improvement in that part of our scheme to reduce water loss interruptions for our customers.