

GEOGRAPHE CATCHMENT

**12. Ms L. METTAM to the Minister for Water:**

The Geographe catchment and surrounding waterways are very environmentally significant for bird and fish habitat populations and are of great importance to people living in and visiting the region. Can the minister please update the house on the state government's recent investment to improve the health of the region's waterways?

**Ms M.J. DAVIES replied:**

I thank the member for the question.

We had a Vasse Taskforce meeting at the end of last year and we were very pleased to announce \$15 million over four years to address some of the long-term issues that that part of the state has been impacted by, including foul-smelling waters in some of their estuaries, and fish kills. As members would understand, this has built up over a long period due to development and agricultural practices. The previous Minister for Water and I conducted an investigation and a review and instituted the Vasse Taskforce to bring together all the stakeholders to work together to create solutions for some of these problems. It has taken a monumental effort from a large range of stakeholders and they will continue to do so. Just because we have made the announcement, it will not now go away; it will take a long time to resolve these issues. I am very pleased to say that although I have been the chair of the task force for the last year, I am handing over that responsibility to the local member to continue to implement the strategy that this group has developed over the past 12 months. I am also very pleased to say that royalties for regions is providing nearly half of the funding for this project. A significant number of partner contributions are also being made. We have skin in the game from organisations such as the City of Busselton and North Metropolitan Region groups—there is a whole range, showing the real commitment that everyone has to really try to resolve some of these issues. The strategy has 30 actions including working with farmers to reduce effluent and fertilisers going into the waterways, and investigating options to look at the way that our river flows have been cut off by the creation of drainage over time. Down the track it will potentially require some reworking of some of those riverways and drainage. We are also working very closely with Busselton Water to look at some of the innovative ways that we can better use stormwater and wastewater recycling. These projects will be undertaken across the whole catchment. We are right on the cusp of something really exciting. It was very welcomed by all the stakeholders at the end of last year. It is a \$15 million investment and I am very pleased that the local member will now take over the chairing and the responsibility for implementing that strategy with all of our other stakeholders.