

WATER LICENCES — ALLOCATIONS — WARREN–DONNELLY AREA

956. Hon DIANE EVERS to the minister representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation's letter to an applicant dated 5 April 2019 stating that it identified a high latent volume associated with approximately 30 to 50 per cent of unused or underutilised entitlements across the Warren–Donnelly plan area.

- (1) How much of the volume has not been taken for more than three consecutive years?
- (2) Does the department routinely discuss with licensees their actual short and long-term water requirements, as per its own policy?
 - (a) If yes to (2), how often does this occur, and in cases of underutilisation, did the department establish genuine extenuating circumstances for existing users to retain their allocations?
 - (b) If no to (2), why not?
 - (c) If no to (2), will the minister commit to reviewing these allocations with a view to recouping and redistributing the allocation, given there are some applicants denied water allocations on the basis of the water being fully allocated?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for that question. This is a very complex matter, and the following information has been provided to me by the Minister for Water.

- (1) The 2003 “Statewide Policy No 11: Management of Unused Licensed Water Entitlements” applies throughout the state to all water resources and relates to the recouping of unused water entitlements. However, a water allocation plan may contain additional policies related to the management of unused water entitlements in specific areas of the state. To the extent that there is any inconsistency between statewide policy 11 and the policies contained in the water allocation plan, the water allocation plan will prevail.
The 2012 “Warren–Donnelly Surface Water Allocation Plan” specifically identifies in table 4, at page 30, that if water taken to be stored in a dam is a specified use on the licence, it is not considered to be unused water. Therefore, as storage is not considered to be unused water, the department has not applied statewide policy 11 in the Warren–Donnelly area.
The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation licenses water entitlements generally equivalent to the storage capacity of the dam, with a designated use inclusive of storage. Under the local policy in the Warren–Donnelly plan area, if licensees take water to the dam capacity and store it in that dam, there is, by definition, no unused water to recoup.
- (2)
 - (a) The department has undertaken more than 50 one-on-one meetings and/or farm visits with growers in the Warren–Donnelly area over the past 12 months. The department specifically held a targeted meeting with landholders in the Manjimup Brook–Yanmah–Dixvale sub-area in May 2019 in which it discussed opportunities to activate underutilised water in the sub-area.
 - (b)–(c) Not applicable.