

WATER CORPORATION — REBRANDING

**394. Dr D.J. HONEY to the Minister for Water:**

I refer the minister to the public reports about the Water Corporation spending \$148 000 on an unnecessary rebranding public relations exercise during a time when households are struggling with the cost of living, and, importantly, to the minister not being made aware of such an important exercise before it commenced.

- (1) How much money was the Water Corporation intending to spend on the rebranding project; and how, and when, did the minister become aware of the rebranding exercise?
- (2) Does the minister have any further protocols in place to ensure that proposals like this are approved by him before public money is wasted in this way?

**Mr D.J. KELLY replied:**

I thank the Leader of the Liberal Party for the question.

- (1)–(2) I think the Water Corporation is actually a really brilliant organisation. When we look at the work that it does around the state, we are really lucky to have a publicly owned utility to manage our water. With regard to the rebranding exercise that the member referred to—I will give some detail about that in a minute—imagine how much money would have been spent by that organisation had the former government stayed in office and privatised it, which is what we have seen traditionally from members opposite.

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You make it up as you go along, don't you?

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** You talk about it. You have a history of privatising —

**Dr D.J. Honey:** You just make it up as you go along.

**Mr D.J. KELLY:** You asked a question. You have a history of privatising state utilities. Imagine how much would have been spent had you been in government!

Having said that, the Water Corporation does a wonderful job managing our water supply from Esperance to Kununurra. It is dealing with the impacts of climate change. When members opposite were in government, that is something they told the Water Corporation it could not talk about. It has implemented a whole range of hardship policies, following the direction of this government, so that we have significantly reduced the number of customers who are in hardship. Therefore, I think, overall, it does a brilliant job. But, like any organisation, it does not get everything right all the time.

The member is right: the Water Corporation was considering a rebranding program. I found out about it. My ministerial office received an email on 28 February telling us that the Water Corporation wanted to talk to us about a proposed rebranding. One of my staff met with the Water Corporation on 9 March, and the response given was that it had better brief the minister about that. On 23 March—14 days later—I got a briefing, and I told the Water Corporation that I could not see any value for customers in going ahead with rebranding. The first time I heard about it from the Water Corporation was on 23 March, and I told it I did not support it, so the rebranding did not go ahead. That killed it. That killed it stone dead.

Should the Water Corporation have spent that money on preparing a proposal to get it to a point at which it wanted to brief the minister? No. I did not think it was worthwhile, but that is the attitude I take on this side of the house. The Water Corporation does a fabulous job in the way it deals with customers and climate change and the way it makes sure that regional WA in particular is well serviced. But does it get everything right all the time? No, it does not. That is why, when I found out about this proposal, I put an end to it.

Several members interjected.

**The SPEAKER:** Order, please, members!