

WATER LICENSING FOR FARM DAMS

**1. Hon BARRY HOUSE to the minister representing the Minister for the Environment:**

The minister seems to have developed wanderlust again. Further to the minister's answer to my question without notice 1139 on 19 August 2003 -

- (1) Will the minister reaffirm the claim that currently there is no consultation occurring in relation to water licensing for farm dams in Western Australia, nor is there any proposal to licence farm dams?
- (2) Which areas of Western Australia are proclaimed surface water management areas?
- (3) Given that surface water management area committees such as the Warren-Lefroy advisory committee have managed their responsibilities in an exemplary way for about 40 years, why is the Government considering the implementation of licence fees, administration charges and other charges for water owned by farmers?
- (4) Does the Government intend to introduce water charges for bores in residential areas, including those partly funded by the Government?

**Hon KIM CHANCE replied:**

I thank Hon Barry House for some notice of this question. On behalf of the Minister for Local Government, I answer the first part of (1).

- (1) The Minister for the Environment can confirm that there was no specific consultation process under way in relation to licences for farm damming. Consultation with property owners on whether particular water use needs to be licensed occurs on an ongoing basis through the regional offices of the Water and Rivers Commission.

The balance of the answer is lengthy, and I seek leave to table the answer and have it incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The following material was incorporated -

---

- (1) As there are various types of dams, it is important that the term farm dam is clarified. Farm dams are dams that are generally: built off-stream; built in paddocks; used primarily for stock water; are generally small in capacity; and have minimal individual impact on the environment. Because farm dams have little or no impact on other water users' ability to capture water, there is no need to licence them. On-stream dams are built on streams or water courses; can range in capacity; are used for a range of purposes, including stock water, domestic water and irrigation; and can have a significant impact on water users and the environment. On-stream dams require licensing in some areas as they can have a significant impact on other users or the environment in some areas.
- (2) The following areas of Western Australia are proclaimed surface water management areas for the purpose of issuing water licences: Pilbara River and tributaries; Avon River system; Avon River catchment; Brunswick River and tributaries; Capel River and tributaries; Dandalup River system; Donnelly River and tributaries; Eneabba Creek and tributaries; Fitzroy River and tributaries; Gingin Brook and tributaries; Gascoyne River and tributaries; Greenough River and tributaries; Hill River and tributaries; Moore River and certain tributaries; Murray River and tributaries; Ord River and tributaries; Serpentine River; Swan River and tributaries; and Stony Brook and tributaries.
- (3) The importance of groups like the Warren Water Management Area Advisory Committee is well recognised. These committees provide valuable local knowledge and expertise to assist the management of the State's water resources, but these committees do not do it alone. The Water and Rivers Commission undertakes many activities such as water licensing that create secure and valuable water entitlements and help protect the environment. These costs are currently met by taxpayers. The demand for water in Western Australia is escalating and the costs of water management are also going up. In accordance with the recommendations of delegates at the Water Symposium, the Water and Rivers Commission has been investigating whether water users should help meet some of the rising costs of water resource management through a small water licensing fee, as is the case in other jurisdictions throughout Australia and the world. The commission has consulted with a 17-key-stakeholder reference group on this issue. The Government has not yet considered the commission's proposal.

- (4) The commission has proposed that if licence fees were introduced, non-intensive stock and domestic use would be exempt from fees throughout the State. This position reflects the legal position that the need to hold a water licence for non-intensive stock and domestic purposes has been removed for most of Western Australia.
-